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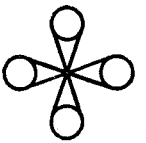

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NOTES

. . . "The New is Unknown" is the first of **REINHARD LETTAU's** work to appear in translation in America. Mr. Lettau is a young German writer who teaches Humanities and 18th- and 20th-century literature at Smith. At the age of 14, he writes us, he was leading an anti-tank group, none of whom were older than himself. "There was a big air raid, none of us was hurt, I sent my men home, went home myself. My mother disarmed me. But printing that would distract readers perhaps." . . . **LESLIE FIEDLER** describes his new novel as a "historical romance." At the moment it's called **Back to China.** Mr. Fiedler is at Buffalo this year. . . . **HAROLD ROSENBERG's** latest book is **The Anxious Object: Art and its Audience** (Horizon). . . . **FRANK KERMODE** returned this fall to the University of Manchester from a year at Wesleyan. . . . **JACK LUDWIG** is Chairman of the English Department at Stony Brook. His novel, **Confusions,** came out last year. . . . **"JASON THATCHER"** is the pseudonym of a young American who is living at present in Paris completing a novel. He lived and worked in Ghana last year. . . . **GORE VIDAL** is going back to Italy for a year to work on a novel about Washington. . . . **WILLIAM YOUNGREN,** who teaches Humanities at M.I.T., has played jazz piano and collected records for a number of years. He started playing in high school around Chicago, was in a band at Amherst, and played his way to Europe a couple of times. . . . **B. H. HAGGIN** is a music critic who writes regularly for several magazines and has just published a collection of his pieces, **Music Observed** (Oxford). . . . **G. S. FRASER** is just back in England from an academic year in the U.S. during which, he says, he "traveled widely and met many writers and poets." He is working on a new book, tentatively titled **The American Voice in Poetry.** . . . Yale has just put out **GEOFFREY H. HARTMAN's Wordsworth's Poetry, 1787-1814** and Oxford **PETER STANSKY's Ambitions and Strategies.** Mr. Hartman teaches at Iowa and Mr. Stansky at Harvard. . . . **MARTIN DUBERMAN** is living in New York this year on a fellowship from Princeton, editing a collection of new essays revaluating the antislavery movement, which Princeton is bringing out this spring. **In White America** opened in London this fall and got excellent reviews. . . . **RICHARD HOWARD** is working on a new book but we are sorry to hear he is giving up translating.

Our apologies to John Simon. We left him out of the index for 1964. He reviewed J.I.M. Stewart's Eight Modern Writers in the Fall issue (XXXI, 4).

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Steven Marcus

PISANUS FRAXI, PORNOGRAPHER ROYAL

On March 30, 1877, two hundred and fifty copies of a privately printed volume left the hands of an unidentified London printer. The manuscript of this work had been with him for almost two years, and its passage into print had been beset with unusual difficulties. The printing establishment was small, its "readers," such as they were, incompetent to correct the press of a complex and technical text, which was, moreover, written in several languages; and the compositor who set up the volume was himself familiar with only one language. As a consequence, the editorial reading of the work throughout its various stages of preparation devolved upon the author, and the extent of his thoroughness and care may be seen in the seven full pages of errata which he caused to be included at the end of the printed volume.

The title of the work is *Index Librorum Prohibitorum: being Notes Bio-Biblio-Icono-graphical and Critical, on Curious and Uncommon Books.* The volume is in large quarto, and is printed on heavy, toned paper (it weighs almost four pounds). It has an engraved frontispiece and reproduces by photo-lithography occasional facsimile pages from works which it discusses in its text. It generously mixes inks and types of print: the title of each book noticed in the text is printed in red, the essential part of that title in Black Letter, and the names of authors, artists, and publishers in Small Capitals; in the index, authors' names are in Small Capitals, titles are in Old English, and subjects are printed in Antique; and throughout the volume, capitals, italics, and other faces, along with a variety of spacings and settings are freely used. The work consists of an Introduction of seventy-six pages, a body of text four hundred and thirty-six pages long, a thirty-eight page list of "Authorities Consulted," and an Index of fifty-eight pages—all of this, including other minor

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additions, amounting to a mass of six hundred and twenty-one pages of print. Its author listed himself on the title page as Pisanus Fraxi.

The *Index Librorum Prohibitorum*—the title of course is humorously annexed from the Roman Catholic organ of censorship—is the first bibliography in the English language devoted to writings of a pornographic or sexual character. But the *Index* is itself only part of a work, for in 1879 there followed a second, companion volume, *Centuria Librorum Absconditorum,* and in 1885 Pisanus Fraxi completed his project with a third volume, entitled, *Catena Librorum Tacendorum*. This bibliographical trilogy is not only the first work of its kind in English; it is undoubtedly the most important, and probably the most important in any language. All later writings on this subject draw on its resources, either by reference, direct quotation, or outright cribbing; and half of the legends, rumors, and generally broadcast fantasies that have to do with pornographic writing can be traced, like the links of some bizarre chain-letter, to their original source in these volumes. Such a weight of indebtedness is a result not merely of the knowledge of the writer and the comprehensiveness of his work but of the particular bibliographical form which he chose. These three volumes are not a simple listing of titles, dates, editions, etc. For the largest majority of his entries, the author includes a description or summary of the contents of the work under discussion, quotes liberally, adds annotation and critical remarks of his own, and generally brings to bear whatever relevant or collateral information he possesses—which is always formidable. These volumes, then, cannot be regarded as a secondary source alone; they are primary material of the first interest, touching as they do on any number of points of social and moral history. They also serve to introduce us to a special kind of mind or person—the bibliophile of means, the wealthy collector of pornographic books.

Pisanus Fraxi was the pseudonym of Henry Spencer Ashbee.[1] Born in London in 1834, Ashbee was, according to the *Dictionary of National Biography,* "apprenticed in youth to the large firm of Copestake's, Manchester warehousemen . . . for whom he travelled for many years." Subsequently, the *DNB* goes on, "he founded and became senior partner in the London firm of Charles Lavy & Co., of

1 Fraxi is a freely invented form of the Latin *fraxinus,* ash or ash-tree; Pisanus is a scatological pun.

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Coleman Street, merchants, the parent house of which was in Hamburg," eventually marrying Miss Lavy there. Toward the end of the 1860's he "organized an important branch of the business at Paris . . . where he thenceforth spent much time." By this time Ashbee had "amassed a handsome fortune," and he was able thenceforward to devote his leisure to "travel, bibliography, and book collecting." He traveled widely—though accounts of where he went to and when differ—and wrote about his journeys. His collections included among other things "the finest Cervantic library out of Spain," various rare illustrated volumes, and a large number of works of art, these latter being largely water-color drawings by English eighteenth- and nineteenth-century artists. And his collection of various and assorted pornographic matter was according to all accounts the most elaborate and extensive ever to have been assembled by a private person.[2]

Ashbee was closely acquainted with the notorious, and pathetic, Frederick Hankey, a wealthy Englishman who spent most of his adult life in Paris attempting to live out the fantasy that he was another Marquis de Sade—Ashbee spoke of him as "a second de Sade *without the intellect.*" Through Hankey, Ashbee met James Monckton Milnes (then, inevitably, Lord Houghton), whose collection of French pornographic writings, particularly those by Sade, was well-known throughout the upper reaches of English literary society. What may be thought of as the Milnes-Hankey-Ashbee axis—or syndrome—forms one of those curious intersections of meeting which often occurred in Victorian England, and which any understanding of the period must take into account. On Hankey's death in 1882, part of his small but highly specialized collection passed into the hands of Ashbee. Ashbee himself died in 1900. He bequeathed the bulk of his

2 Note on terminology. I have decided in this essay to use the word pornography as the general descriptive term for most of the material discussed. It is, I am aware, not altogether a satisfactory term, but it seems to me better than the ones usually used. The *DNB,* for example, offers the quaint "Kruptadia," which is clearly impossible. The "curiosa" of booksellers is nothing but a blind. And as for the "erotic books" or "Erotica" which are in general currency, these seem to me little more than euphemisms which have through indiscriminate usage been hopelessly corrupted in the bargain, if indeed they ever meant anything. Most of the writing which is classified as "Erotica" seems to me in intention, in effect, and in fact pornographic, and I can find no sound reason for avoiding the term. When in the course of this study occasion arises to discuss a work which, though it deals with sexual matters, is not pornographic, notice will of course be taken of the fact.

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library of rare books—to the number of 15,299—to the British Museum. That institution, according to a French source, at first considered refusing the gift, but finally accepted it because Ashbee, having bequeathed to it at the same time his collection of all the editions and translations of *Don Quixote,* had placed it as a condition of this legacy that the British Museum conserve his erotic library as well. This library is presumably still there.

At the opening of the *Index* Ashbee announces his intention as "truth, the extension of bibliographical studies, and the accurate description of the works noticed in the following pages." Further on he amplifies this statement. "The object of the present work," he writes, "is to catalogue, as thoroughly, and at the same time, as tersely as possible, books which, as a rule, have not been mentioned by former bibliographers, and to notice them in such a way that the student or collector may be able to form a pretty just estimate of their value or purport, without having recourse to the books themselves." The service thus performed is, to put it simply, rather ambiguous, and there is something slightly teasing if not superior about the last part of that sentence. It should be said, however, that this attitude is not typical of Ashbee; although as we shall see his shortcomings are considerable, he did not usually think of himself as resting upon an eminence—he is, after all, the sovereign of an underworld. And he is aware of it. "My object," he continues, "is to collect into a common fold the stray sheep, to find a home for the pariahs of every nation. I do not then hesitate to notice the catchpennies hawked in the public streets, as well as the sumptuous volumes got up for the select few, and whose price is counted in guineas. I embrace indeed that which should be avoided as well as that which should be sought." And since this is the first bibliography of its kind in English—and actually the first of its kind in any language—Ashbee's work is cut out for him.

The difficulties to be overcome in this branch of bibliography are enormous, "everything connected with it being involved in obscurity, and surrounded with deception"—a situation which has since not substantially changed. "The author writes, for the most part, anonymously, or under an assumed name; the publisher generally affixes a false impress with an incorrect date; and the title is not unfrequently worded so as to mislead with regard to the real contents of the book." To discover the author of a particular book is frequently impossible, and this is especially true of English, where

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"nothing has been done, and the task is now almost hopeless." Nevertheless, Ashbee has been able to discover the names of some modern authors, and has traced the operations of the booksellers, a pursuit, he remarks, "equally interesting, but quite as difficult." Another difficulty has to do with the extraordinary range, diffusion, and quantity of works which fall into this category, and one of Ashbee's purposes in the *Index* is "to show through what widely spread ramifications erotic literature extends, and what a vast field has to be traversed. The field indeed, even in this restricted portion of bibliography, is so extended, and the books so numerous, that I have no hope of ever exhausting my subject." Furthermore, most of the books of this class are printed "either privately or surreptitiously, in small issues, for special classes of readers or collectors," and from the first must be thought of as scarce or uncommon. And they tend rapidly to become scarcer: "They do not usually find their way into public libraries . . . but are for the most part possessed by amateurs, at whose death they are not unfrequently burned; and they are always liable to destruction at the hands of the law. Their scarcity then . . . is very much in proportion to their age; and as society is constantly, so to say, at war with them, the natural course is for them to die out altogether." In the light of these remarks one can more fully understand that blackmailing provision in Ashbee's bequest to the British Museum. Rather than permit his cherished collection of obscenities to be dispersed or destroyed, the old bibliophile, with appropriate Quixotry, would have allowed his entire library to go under: without institutional custodianship, it would very likely have been broken up and sold at auction. Ideals, it seems, can find expression even in such a morass as this.

In composing the *Index* Ashbee had to contend with certain problems of method. He at first planned to classify his material by subjects but soon found this impracticable, "the titles of this kind of books being so specially deceptive." Consequently he adopted in the *Index* a strictly alphabetical arrangement, a decision which postponed rather than solved his bibliographical difficulties (and in any event the entire contents of the volume are recapitulated in the final alphabetical index). By the time he was ready with his second volume, however, Ashbee's sense of his project had both strengthened and refined, and the *Centuria* and the *Catena* are arranged according to subject. This arrangement is in itself of interest since it casts

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light not only on the field of study but on how Ashbee's mind regarded it. Volume II, the *Centuria Librorum Absconditorum*, may be roughly divided as follows. It begins with some fifteen pages noticing the works of Martin Schurig, an early eighteenth-century German physician and antiquary, who wrote a virtually endless series of historico-medico-sexual volumes, purporting to deal with the folk-lore as well as the actuality of sex. Like almost all writing of this kind, including that which is published nowadays, Schurig's work is itself folk-lore, though Ashbee is unable to consider it so. There follows some three hundred pages devoted to books of an "objectionable, immoral, or obscene nature" which also have to do with religion, particularly Roman Catholicism; this combination of anti-clericalism with pornography is a characteristic mode of the genre. Forty further pages are given to noticing the eighteenth-century poem, "The Toast," and to a discussion of Rochester's writings. Then there are fifty pages concerning the obscene drawings and engravings of Thomas Rowlandson. The text of the book concludes with an extended notice-cum-discussion of French sodomy, English flagellation, and some further fragments of anti-clericalism. Volume III, the *Catena Librorum Tacendorum,* is equally miscellaneous in its contents. It opens with thirty pages devoted to works "in various languages upon subjects relating generally to peculiarities of the sexes, or to their connection, criminal or otherwise, with each other." The succeeding thirty pages contain a discussion of the sexual life of Venice, of its prostitutes and courtesans in particular. The next three hundred pages are concerned with English pornographic fiction; the first two hundred and fifty of these pages deal with separately published individual works, the remainder with periodical publications. A short section is devoted to folk-lore, popular tales, and Spanish fiction. The text of the volume closes with almost one hundred pages of "Additions" to all the foregoing categories.

Turning retrospectively to examine Volume I, the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum,* we can say that these irregularly assorted categories by and large cover Ashbee's interests there, if we add to them his notices—which accumulate throughout all three of the volumes—of English collectors, writers, and publishers of pornography during his own time who were personally known to him. And we can say as well that these categories, with certain minor exceptions, just about exhaust the field itself. They do so, however, rather accidentally, and

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demonstrate the extensive range of Ashbee's reading more than they do the success of his method. Although Volumes II and III represent an advance over the intellectually primitive alphabetical arrangement of the *Index,* the topical subdivisions of those volumes are arbitrarily placed and grouped; and the relations of the subdivisions are insignificant and manifest no particular order or direction. They provide Ashbee with a convenient way of displaying his reading, which is what he wants to do; they cannot be thought of as imposing a genuine intellectual order on the material, or as providing the distance which an intellectual instrument requires. On the other hand, to expect an absolutely original effort, and especially in such a field as this, to give us more than Ashbee has would be not merely arrogant and excessive but historically innocent.

Ashbee distinguishes himself from most previous bibliographers by virtue of the attention he gives to the contents of the books he examines. Bibliographers have hitherto, he remarks, confined themselves "to the outsides . . . of the books which they have described, and have rarely penetrated further than the title page or the colophon." Such records are naturally useful as far as they go, "but the student requires to be informed of much more than this; he wants to get at the contents, and this with as little loss of time as possible; he must have an estimate of what is in the book, so that he may be able at once to decide whether he has to read it, or to leave it alone, and pass on to something else." To this end Ashbee has ventured further than any earlier bibliographer "in giving frequent and copious extracts . . . a few lines by the author himself being, in my opinion, a better guide for the appreciation of him and his book than a page of description from another pen." And he has further collected "the opinions of previous critics and bibliographers, so that the reader may estimate the books rather from their remarks than from my own." This quality of self-effacement is seldom met with outside of those minds whose command of their subject is inwardly so secure that they need not assert it.

The command Ashbee had achieved of his subject was equalled by the assiduity and thoroughness with which he treated it and prepared his work. This trustworthiness is indeed the hallmark of his reputation. In his Introduction to the *Index* he lays it down as his invariable, and italicized, rule *"never to criticise a work which I have not read, nor to describe a volume or an edition which I have not*

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examined." And he follows this rule invariably throughout the first two volumes. Volume III contains an unimportant but interesting exception. At one point in his "Preliminary Remarks," Ashbee prints a footnote, three pages in length, which consists of a bare alphabetical listing of the titles of certain works of English fiction. He introduces the footnote with this explanation: "The books, all I believe, exist, or have existed, and most of them have passed through my hands at one time or another; as however they are not all before me now, I do not guarantee the titles given to be invariably correct." Several pages further on, Ashbee turns to acknowledge his indebtedness to a number of friends and associates, now dead, who helped him in the work on all three volumes. Among these was one James Campbell, bibliophile, book-collector, and writer of pornography, whose scholarship or expertise Ashbee implies to have been the equal of his own. Campbell, unlike Ashbee, was not a wealthy man and could not afford to publish his own work. Shortly before his death, however, he presented Ashbee with three manuscript volumes of "Bibliographical Notes," and Ashbee states that he "found them of great service" in preparing the final volume. It is possible, therefore, that that long footnote-listing along with several other minor entries in the *Catena* are at least in part Campbell's work, which Ashbee had every reason to trust. We can, on the other hand, take this small and not fully substantiated exception as an additional indicator of Ashbee's unique integrity in a world of thieves, brigands, frauds, and liars.

As a final note on method, Ashbee raises the unavoidable question for an undertaking such as his of the bibliographer's tact and modesty. "In treating of obscene books," he writes, "it is self evident that obscenities cannot be avoided. Nevertheless, although I do not hesitate to call things by their right names, and to employ technical terms when necessary, yet in my own text I never use an impure word when one less distasteful but equally expressive can be found." This statement is, as far as it goes, a model of straightforwardness; whether it in fact answers the question raised is a matter into which we shall have further occasion to inquire.

II

The various introductions and preliminary remarks to Ashbee's three volumes amount to almost two hundred pages, a small book in itself. In the course of these essays Ashbee expresses himself on a

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large number of topics related to the central interest of his work; and the ideas and attitudes he therein reveals lead us a step forward in our consideration of that subject and of him. In the first place there is the inevitable problem of justification: how does one secure intellectual authorization for the study of matter so outlawed, vile, worthless, depraved, etc. A convenient argument is close to hand—pornography is valuable because it reflects or expresses social history. "I hold that for the historian or the psychologist these books, whether in accordance with, or contrary to the prejudices and tendencies of the age, must be taken into account as well as, if not in preference to those in many other and better cultivated fields of literature . . . where shall we find a more truthful and striking picture of the rottenness and depravity of the old French *noblesse,* which undoubtedly hastened, if they did not produce the first revolution, than in the memoirs of the time, or in the novels of Mirabeau, de Sade, Andrea de Nerciat, Choderlos de Laclos, and others; or what history will make us so well comprehend the vices, follies, and venalities which disgraced the courts of our Georges, as the lampoons, scandalous biographies, and scurrilous periodicals with which that period abounded? Such writers undoubtedly reflected the times in which they lived, if they were not, as some historians maintain, the actual necessities and complements of their respective epochs." And he goes on to enlist both Buckle and Macaulay in his support, quoting at length from them passages in which they contend that the vices of an historical period are as important for its understanding as its virtues. There is to be sure a certain degree of truth in this argument, but it is a degree of truth decidedly easy to overestimate (nowadays this overestimation is tending to become part of advanced received doctrine). Pornography, like every other creation of the mind, is by definition historical; it is the product of a particular time and place. And it inevitably contains a certain amount of observation, some of it registered consciously, some unconsciously. Unlike the situation which exists in the novel, however, observation is incidental rather than organic to pornography—its governing tendency in fact is toward the elimination of external or social reality. And although on first inspection pornography seems to be the most concrete kind of writing—concerned as it is with organs, positions, events—it is in reality very abstract. It regularly moves toward independence of time, space, history, and even language itself. Furthermore, since it is by

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both internal, formal necessity and social convention isolated from social and historical actuality, it registers social and historical changes, if it registers them at all, more slowly and crudely than the novel, or for that matter almost any other form of written expression.

How profound this confusion can become appears in Ashbee's second discussion of fiction. In the Preliminary Remarks to Volume III he states that "fiction, of whatever description, always was, and still continues to be, one of the most influential branches of literature, and one of the surest sources whence to gather a picture of the times." He goes on to discuss different kinds of novels and novelists and then reaches this conclusion: "Now, Erotic Novels, falling as they generally do into the category of domestic fiction, contain, at any rate the best of them, the truth, and 'hold the mirror up to nature' more certainly than do those of any other description." In addition, "their authors have, in most instances, been eye-witnesses of the scenes they have described, as were a Furetière, a Restif de la Bretonne, or, to borrow but two examples from our own writers, a Defoe, or a Dickens; or even have, like a Marquis de Sade, themselves enacted, in part, what they have portrayed." The assimilation of all the varieties and degrees of this kind of writing to the Domestic Novel is ludicrous (it does, however, add a new dimension of meaning to the idea of the family romance). As for the argument on behalf of the superior "realism" of this kind of fiction, it can at best be entertained in a provisional and minimal way. But the whole case collapses when we see that all its claims are based on the belief that the writers of such fiction have in one way or another actually experienced the incidents they represent. In the overwhelming majority of instances this is the reverse of truth, and pornographic fiction cannot as a whole be thought of as a record of experience but must be thought of as a record of fantasy. Since these fantasies do actually exist, it is possible to say that in a certain sense pornography is a "realistic" representation of them—at least they are "realized" in pornographic fiction. But the question of "truth" or "reality" ends as a rule right there.

Much the same thing, it can be argued, is true of the novel itself. And we must allow a degree of credibility to this assertion. In the novel, however, the proportions are different, and the balance or intermixture of fantasy and experience infinitely more complex. Moreover, however realistic a novel tries to be it is always conscious of

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itself as a story, as something made up. Pornography tries precisely to subdue or extinguish this consciousness; it typically undertakes to represent itself not as a story or fantasy but as something which "really" happened—which serves to indicate at what a primitive level of fantasy it exists. In the degree that one accepts this combination of confusion and deception, in that degree is one involved in the pornographic fantasy itself. Ashbee, we can see, is fairly deeply involved.

Another sign of his involvement can be made out in a further intellectual error which the passage I have quoted commits. What Ashbee has done in it is to assimilate the entire category of obscene or pornographic fiction to the few exceptions within it, to those few works which tend to rise above the genre, or pretend to do so. This is to confuse critical judgment with phenomenological analysis; in addition, as we shall see, most of these exceptions are not exceptions at all but still operate within the conventions and standards of the genre from which they arise, and continue to refer to it more than they do to the novel or to anything else. We can conclude, therefore, that the justification of the study of pornography on the grounds of its importance or utility as social history is a slender and flimsy support indeed. Intellectually it almost involves more difficulties than it is worth.

Other arguments of differing merit may be advanced, and Ashbee resorts to most of them. He maintains, for example, that "no production of the human brain should be ignored, entirely disregarded, or allowed to become utterly lost"; the thought of taking this injunction literally staggers the mind, but one must grant to it a certain kind of ideal truth. Then there is what may be called the *argumentum pro bibliomania*: to the "real lover of books for their own sake, these unknown and outcast volumes . . . are infinitely more interesting than their better known and more universally cherished fellows, and acquire additional value for him in proportion to the persecution they have suffered, their scarcity, and the difficulty he experiences in acquiring them." We may take it as a working rule that such statements act as rationalizations for behavior harmless enough in itself but at the same time troubling enough to require distancing; and that they serve as screens for other motives. No great ingenuity is demanded to discover what these motives are, and Ashbee himself is intermittently capable of revealing them. "The desire

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to possess that which is forbidden," he lets drop in a footnote, "is as strong in the man as the child, in the wise as the foolish." That which is forbidden has naturally to do with sex; but when Ashbee turns his attention to justifying or discussing his own interests in this direction, and asks himself the hypothetical question "why I have not turned my attention to works on subjects . . . more profitable," he is suddenly rendered impotent of thought. "I'll not answer that," he quotes in verse, "But, say, it is my humour; Is it answered?" This combination of a commendable though poignant candor with a disinclination or inability to examine the contents of one's mind or the nature of one's motives is familiar—we have already met with it in Acton.[3] And we shall meet with it again repeatedly, it being, I believe, a characteristic mode of defense not only of pornography and the pornographic mind but of the stage of mental development which both may be said to have attained. And Ashbee is precise in his choice of the term "humour"; he is using it in the older historical sense, which signifies a mental disposition so deeply fixed or rooted as to seem organic in origin. At the same time it describes a state of mind having no apparent ground or reason, and a person "in his humour" appears both to those who observe him, and often to himself as well, as someone possessed by a capricious or eccentric drive—which cannot be gratified since its demands are infinite. He is in other words in subjection to himself, although he does not experience it this way. In the Preliminary Remarks to the *Centuria,* for example, Ashbee offers an apology to the reader for his failure in this volume to reach "the goal for which I am striving. I have not been able strictly to carry out my intention of registering and branding exclusively worthless books . . . . I have been attracted by masterpieces, and have neglected the unartistic; consequently in this volume less rubbish will be found than in the *Index Librorum Prohibitorum.*" The faintly plangent note of regret is struck as Ashbee, looking back over his second volume, suddenly recognizes that in it his "humour" has been temporarily defeated or derailed by "higher" aims. It puts one in mind of Noddy Boffin gazing wistfully over his shoulder at the beloved dust-heaps he has had to relinquish.

Given over thoroughly to this pursuit, Ashbee is none the less

3 *Partisan Review,* XXXI, 2 (Spring, 1964).

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a Victorian. He makes it emphatically clear that he does not "mean to say that books either blasphemous, immoral, indecent, or written to inflame the passions should be put into the hands of young people, far from it," although, he counters, such books "are necessary and profitable for the student to know." Who that student is—he keeps turning up throughout Ashbee's pages without ever becoming any less anonymous—we all know well enough. And even here, Ashbee continues to consider, such books should "be used with caution even by the mature; they should be looked upon as poisons, and treated as such; should be (so to say) distinctly labelled, and only confided to those who understand their potency, and are capable of rightly using them. The present work, of which the part object is the labelling or pointing out such books, is not intended, any more than the volumes of which it treats, for the young and immature; and the hope is here expressed that it may be kept out of the hands of those for whom it is not destined." From garbage or rubbish to potent poison; the language tells us that we are still in the world of William Acton, as do the attitudes of which that language is the vehicle. As for the hope which Ashbee expresses in the last clause, he had nothing to worry about: an iron law of nature determines it that such books pass only into the hands of those for whom they are destined.

It is difficult to decide to what extent the divisions in Ashbee's consciousness are the result of ordinary hypocrisy or of unconscious contradictions. On the one hand, he writes, "it is no part of my programme to preach or moralize." He does not commend the authors noticed, he asserts, nor does he praise their "lewdness, immorality, or irreligion. If I do not directly censure them . . . I at any rate merely lay their turpitudes or blasphemies before my readers as a truthful and unbiassed historian would do." That last sentence, we may note, is going in two directions at the same time, the "merely" making hash out of its original logic. But deflections of this kind are themselves the essential logic of thinking on this subject; they are its native mode or style of thought. So, Ashbee continues, "although the citations I produce are frequently licentious, being as a matter of course those which I have considered the most remarkable or most pungent," none of them and nothing in his work is "sufficient to inflame the passions." Indeed he asseverates, "My extracts on the contrary will, I trust and believe, have a totally opposite effect, and as a rule will inspire so hearty a disgust for the books they are taken from, that

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the reader will have learned enough about them from my pages, and will be more than satisfied to have nothing further to do with them." There is scarcely any point in analysing the impossibilities of this utterance, particularly in view of what has immediately preceded them. The point to be noted is that the several elements in Ashbee's exposition—his "humour," the danger to both young and mature, his disavowal of moralizing, and at the same time the sanative moral effect he expects his work to have—are not simply contradictory; he is unaware of contradiction, and these conflicting tendencies exist side by side in his mind yet function autonomously and in isolation from one another. In addition to isolation, then, a whole series of unconscious displacements and denials are enlisted to make this kind of thinking possible or acceptable to consciousness. And as we shall have ample opportunity to observe, displacement and denial are among the chief *modus operandi* of pornographic writing.

These contradictions are the very tissue of Ashbee's intellect; they are to be found within single sentences as well as in adjacent passages. In his Preliminary Remarks to Volume III, the *Catena,* for example, Ashbee concludes his discussion of the value for social history of pornographic fiction with this statement: "Immoral, and amatory fiction then claims our study, and must unfortunately be acknowledged to contain, *cum grano salis,* a reflection of the manners and vices of the times—of vices to be avoided, guarded against, reformed, but which unquestionably exist, and of which an exact estimate is needful to enable us to cope with them." One hardly knows where to lay hold of this sentence, it is such a mess. To begin with, the grain of salt both cuts the ground out from under everything that has gone before and breaks the sentence into which it is inserted in half. It acts to nullify or neutralize (rather than to genuinely modify) the positive assertions that have preceded it, and in a characteristically ambivalent way allows the writer both to give and take at the same moment, to feel that he is making a daring pronouncement which is by a kind of magical simultaneity safely unexceptionable. And the last part of the sentence repeats the substitution of fantasy for reality, fuses past and present, and garnishes the whole with some sprigs of moral parsley. Similarly in Volume II, when Ashbee is representing the service his exhaustive study of "worthless books" will perform, he adverts to his Pylades, "the student," who must, he says, "conse-

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quently be grateful to the bibliographer who shall have taken the trouble to wade through this literary garbage, shall have estimated it at its real value, and shall give a terse but reliable account of it." Ashbee himself confesses that he has not been entirely able to achieve this object, although he has come closer to it than anyone previous to him. But the "real desideratum," he concludes, is for a "single work which, confining itself to the worthless and deceitful, points out what should be avoided." The reader can understand that in a vague, general way this sentence makes sense. But that it should be cast in the form of a tautology, that the categories it establishes are meaningless, and that the language itself dissolves beneath the slightest pressure of inspection suggests again that we are in the presence of a series of displacements. Such sentences are really about something else and have their referents elsewhere.

These processes may be observed in another context, as invading and conditioning Ashbee's scholarly virtues (it is not possible to make a strict calculation of the degree of causal influence exerted by such processes; they seem rather to act in the manner described in the social sciences as "independent variables"). One of these virtues is Ashbee's practice of giving "frequent and copious extracts" from the works noticed along with "the opinions of previous critics and bibliographers." This modesty and generousness, however, serve a double purpose, as we see a few pages further on when Ashbee declares: "I have not attempted to generalize or draw to a head the various and diverse material which I have manipulated; this is the province of the historian rather than of the bibliographer, and requires a more comprehensive grasp and an abler hand than mine." Here we can observe how Ashbee's virtues and predilections go together and how the former work as both mask and sanction for the latter. For Ashbee shares in common his dislike of or repulsion from generalization with pornography itself. Although as I have said pornography is paradoxically a highly abstract form of expression, it does not achieve its abstractness by means of its generalizing power. Generalization is in fact anathema to pornography, for what generalization does is to sum up or bring to conclusion a train of concrete instances; most of all it dispenses with the need for a further production of such instances, for a repetition of them. But it is precisely in repetition, in repetition sustained to infinity and beyond, that pornography and

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its allied phenomena live and move and have their being. Ashbee's indispensable virtues as a bibliographer, his tireless collection and production of instances, his indefatigable energy of quotation, his unbelievable scrupulosity of concrete detail all partake of the same impulses which both actuate his interest in pornography and are behind its creation. What Ashbee was able to do, then, was to take his obsession, transfer it without significant change or loss of form to a nearly related area, and put it to some further or secondary use. The process is a familiar one, the results in this case were unique.

III

Ashbee's three volumes are at once a monument of personal scholarship and a monument of his personal eccentricity. In point of fact his eccentricity is so deep, radical, and unremitting that clinical terms seem more appropriate than the neutral and, within the context of English culture, virtually honorific ascriptions of oddity or eccentricity or whimsy. The chief characteristic of his writing is its pedantry. The long introductions to the separate volumes are largely composed of long, endless, and more often than not pointless and useless footnotes; there are in reality considerably more footnotes than text in each of them. These footnotes are made up of a variety of material, but the majority of them consist of quotations in an assortment of European languages. The quotations sometimes concern general bibliographical questions, sometimes general questions of literature and morals, and sometimes nothing in general. That is to say, the footnotes are there not because of their relevance to the text above them; they are there because Ashbee wants them there without regard to their content. These footnotes, as a consequence, take on a symbolic meaning, as does the shape of Ashbee's page. The kind of page which Ashbee continually seems to strive for, and which he frequently manages to achieve, consists of a single line of text from which there depends a page of footnote. Ashbee's persistence in this effort is so pronounced that one is tempted to go beyond common sense and see in it an unconscious iconography: beneath a very small head there is attached a very large appendage. But since this appendage principally contains the assertions of other men, Ashbee, em-

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ploying a familiar maneuver of the unconscious, need not feel "responsible" for it.

Ashbee's mania for quotation is not, however, exhausted by these devices. He will stick in a few lines wherever a small blank space occurs, and he is happy to manufacture the opportunity to quote at length and liberty: Volume II, the *Centuria,* for example, opens with no less than six full pages of epigraphs. The functions of such a practice are not difficult to interpret. To use the words of other men instead of one's own is to attempt to arrogate their strength or authority; it is furthermore a primitive device of concealment, the words and ideas of others acting as a protective cover for one's own (children are inveterate quoters). In addition, a text which uses quoted material tends, in proportion to the thickness and frequency with which the quotations are sown, to become progressively less readable. Ashbee's own work, with its perpetual flood of quotations, with quotations interspersed with further quotations in several languages (his habit was always to quote in the original and never to translate), and with every page dotted with hiccoughing references and hieroglyphic citations, indicates that his own impulses in the direction of unreadability were quite strong. And we can understand this too as in part a defensive countermeasure: in a book which is written with the impulse to communicate "everything"—both in the way of knowledge and of sexuality—the counter-tendency to communicate nothing can be expected (just as children, again, who are on the point of communicating or who have just communicated some piece of sexual information to an adult will often spontaneously break into nonsense language). The difference between the impulse to "tell all" and the impulse to tell nothing is in such matters always difficult to maintain.

Another distinctive element in Ashbee's practice is the intensity of his insistence on precision. He makes a point of emphasizing that throughout his work "all extracts given are transcribed with every fault and peculiarity, whether of spelling or punctuation; this should be borne in mind, so that errors which belong to the original may not be attributed to me or my printer." His justification of this absolute literalness is essentially cryptological. Error itself may be a source of knowledge, "for by a peculiarity of diction, a special manner of punctuation, the omission or improper use of an accent, an

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author may be detected, the genuineness of an edition determined, or even in some instances the place and date of the publication fixed." There is certainly a general kind of truth to this notion, and its utility in other areas of bibliographical study has been proved. On the other hand, we should not make the mistake of attributing to Ashbee an anticipation of *The Psychopathology of Everyday Life*: moreover, to my knowledge Ashbee never makes any use of the practice which he so laboriously pursues. Once again we find ourselves in the presence of behavior whose conscious justification has been displaced a considerable distance from its primary motive. For if anything about this question is at all clear it is that Ashbee's chief source of gratification lies in the mere fact of quotation, in the rigidly literal reproduction of what he has read. There is certainly something ritualistic and therefore something of an obsessional nature about this convention. And since, as I have implied, pornography itself is overwhelmingly ritualistic and obsessive, we can regard both the structure and the content of Ashbee's bibliographical performance as being at least in part companion- or counter-obsessions. Contrasts and analogies suggest themselves at once. Pornography is, for example, the most disordered kind of writing; not only are the contents of pornographic writing "disorderly," but the entire field, from the volumes themselves through all the circumstances of publication and collection, amounts to a veritable model of disorganization and absence of control—it is, to be sure, a "dirty" and chaotic state of affairs. Ashbee himself is thoroughly implicated in this dark and dangerous business, but onto it he has imposed what must have seemed to him the most inflexible and powerful kind of order. Accuracy, precision, literalness, reliability, absolute verification—all of these virtues can be seen as bearing with dialectical but equally irrational force on Ashbee's other interest. Yet because these virtues were not adequately beneath the guidance of reason, things did not work out exactly as Ashbee intended. For although he was able to reduce pornography to order and reintroduce it within the iron frame of scholarly and bibliographical control, the demands of that control were themselves remorseless and excessive. And the signs or symptoms of those demands, the fanatical quoting, the invariable literalness and precision, the infinitude of references, operate in the end not to master the subject but to reproduce on another level and in a symbolic way the

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original chaos and disorder they were intended to bring under command. This melancholy compromise will be familiar to anyone who has read much scholarship, in any field of study. Ashbee's work is only an extreme example of a representative instance.

Ashbee did not, naturally, think of himself in this way, and we can perhaps approximate the image he had of himself by examining his remarks on the writer he most praises and toward whom he expresses the strongest sense of affinity, Martin Schurig. "Of all the learned physicians or surgeons who have written upon the physical connection of the sexes," Ashbee writes, "no one has treated the subject so thoroughly, or brought together so many curious, interesting and extraordinary details." And it brings him particular pleasure, Ashbee remarks, to be able to bring "these little known, and less read volumes" before the "lovers of the curiosities of literature." Although physicians before Schurig had made inquiries into sexual matters and written about them, "the particulars, observations, and anecdotes given by Schurig far surpass any thing" that had previously been done. But it is not merely the freeness and boldness of Schurig's compendia which attract Ashbee, but the thoroughness of his scholarship: "Authorities are carefully and fully given; and citations are reproduced in the language and words of their authors. Each volume is furnished with a *Syllabus Autorum* and an *Index Rerum,* alphabetically arranged . . . and verified. It is this thoroughness, peculiar to erudite Germans, which renders their books so valuable to the student, although by the reader for mere amusement they may be thought troublesome and unattractive." Schurig was, in the words of a nineteenth-century French historian of medicine, the author of *"une série de vaste monographies, dans lesquelles il a rassemblé une mass considérable d'observations, puisées de toutes parts, et où il rappelle à peu près tout ce quie avait été fait avant lui."* He was, in other words, one of the first writers of what was to come to be known as *Sittengeschichten,* enormous tomes whose intentions waver between the quasi-scientific and the pseudo-pornographic, whose pedantry is genuine but whose scholarship is spurious, and whose stupidity is invincible. These gala productions of the mind seem to be a speciality of German culture, and continue until today to be turned out in disconcerting quantity.

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The titles of Schurig's books are in dog Latin and are very long. One can stand as a sample of the rest. "*MULIEBRIA Historico-Medica, hoc est Partium Genitalium Muliebrium Consideratio Physico-Medico-Forensis, qua Pudendi Muliebris Partes tam externae, quam internae, scilicet Uterus cum Ipsi Annexis Ovariis et Tubis Fallopianis, nec non Varia de Clitoride et Tribadismo, de Hymen et Nymphotomia seu Feminarum Circumsisione et Castratione selectis et curiosis observationibus traduntur. A.D. Martino Schurigio, Physico Dresdensi . . . MDCCXXIX.*" Other, shortened, titles are, *Spermatologia Historico-Medica, Parthenologia H-M, Gynaecologia H-M, Syllepsilogia H-M,* and so on into the night. These titles, Ashbee observes, convey "but a faint notion, even to one of the profession, of the amusing and curious information" with which the volumes abound. Indeed it is impossible, he says, "without overstepping the limits of a bibliographical compilation . . . to give an adequate notion of the vast gathering of facts and anecdotes embraced" within their pages. What Ashbee curiously fails to mention is that, in a manner customary to the genre, the "facts and anecdotes" are by and large the same from volume to volume: a few new details and incidents are dredged up or invented, there is a certain amount of reshuffling of the material to satisfy the requirements of the book's ostensible subject, but in the main the same old stories and sexual fairy tales are recounted, with a straight face, for the thousandth time. A scattered selection of a few of the topics which Schurig rehearses will give the reader some idea of his work. "Various names of the penis . . . The size of the nose indicative of that of the yard . . . Writers who affirm that Adam was a hermaphrodite . . . De Pudendi muliebris denominationibus . . . Hair on the private parts so luxuriant that it was cut off and sold . . . Sodomy committed in three ways . . . Virgo a serpente amata . . . Salacium puellarum instrumenta . . . Utrum mas an femina majorem voluptatem sentiat . . . Cohaesio in coitu . . . Copulation prevented by the excessive size of the clitoris . . . Bestiality with various animals of both sexes, with mermen and maids, with demons, and with statues . . . De gravidarum coitu . . . Imagination in women." Ashbee also reproduces by photo-lithography a page from one of Schurig's books. It is taken from a section in which Schurig is "treating of the size of the male human member," and

(Continued on Page 99)

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Reinhard Lettau

THE NEW IS UNKNOWN

In one sentence, the device I am offering might be described as a cube of glass inside which it is snowing. To comparisons with ordinary snow-cubes, which are also on the market in the shape of half-balls housing small fragments of landscape, I oppose two arguments: first the size of my machine—it almost fills a medium-size living room—and second the fact that I myself am sitting in it.

Of course I did not enter it after completion of the device, post factum so to say, through some opening. It does not escape the attentive observer that its seamless planes offer no motivation for the reckless suspicion that it was at any time anything but a large, milky cube inside which a lazy snowfall is taking place. My assistant—to whom I also owe the transmission of these lines—often holds a piece of paper up against one of the exterior walls for me to read that the business magnate who happens to be inspecting the device at that moment has just remarked that it does not look to him like a manufactured thing, but rather like something that has sprung into being spontaneously. How many hands have I seen retracing the outer edges of the cube, searching for a minute seam, a rough spot, a flaw. And I have great satisfaction hearing the tentative taps of the scientists, although in here it is hardly perceptible.

My current dwelling place obviously complicates my selling the invention. Not that I question the persuasive faculties of my assistant who is forced to undertake this task—there he smiles, my faithful Bergmann, waving encouragement to me, his arm strangely

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fractured by the glass. No . . . but potential buyers often shy away from the purchase because they fear for my life. I give them to understand from in here, with a variety of gestures, that my presence could, on the contrary, facilitate the first application of the device, since I'd be able to correct actually eliminated, though still possible, "bugs" on the spot, and perfect other performances; but to no avail. Nobody has the courage to buy a first model of anything. Moreover, some customers felt disturbed because I cannot tell them what my device is able to do.

They expect that its absolute newness will be explained to them. Actually they think of the new as a not-previously-presented variant of the old, that this device might, for instance, suddenly lift them into the air, together with this house and a couple of others around it, so that they would find themselves floating above the perplexed city like a fata morgana, or that it might turn into an aquarium with goldfish swimming about or that we, the device and I, might suddenly be doubled, spewing clouds of smoke. One interested party turned a couple of dials, hoping for the appearance of a tidal wave, another expected the device to vomit quantities of darning eggs. Neither Bergmann's words nor my gesturing seem to make them realize that the truly new must deceive such expectations, must deny any relation to the known, must remain absolutely isolated and unknown.

The hopeful backers believe that this apparatus is the ultimate product of human inventiveness, a super-machine equipped with all the refinements of engineering genius. "Which hole, which tube will emit gold on demand?" they seem to be thinking. As though gold hasn't always existed. "Where is the key which, when turned, will change this contraption into a dredge?" The fact that this device capriciously refuses to serve and is, since I consider it successful, not meant to perform any service, does not enlighten them in any way. From this, some people conclude that the device demands service from them and rush home to imitate me. I have the notion that they are on the right road. If everybody were to do that—you too, my dear Bergmann—if you all set to work, the new might become more and more known, more and more realizable. But until then, back to the drawing board.

Translated by Ursule Molinaro

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Leslie A. Fiedler

THE GIRL IN THE BLACK RAINCOAT

FOUR ACADEMIC PARABLES

I

It was only with the Negro janitor, Vernon, that Professor Snow ever talked about the girl in the black raincoat. In fact, it was only with Vern—late at night, after eleven, when all the other offices in the Humanities Building had been swept and it was the turn of 101—that he ever talked about *anything* that mattered to him. With his wife he had long since forgotten how to talk; with his two sons he had never learned; and he had not trusted himself as his own interlocutor ever since it had become clear that his book on Spinoza would never be finished.

Vern laughed a good deal, sometimes sighed, often touched Professor Snow on the shoulder or upper arm; and when deeply moved would say, "You the *original* mothah, Doc!" or "Doc, baby, you a niggah, too." Both epithets pleased Professor Snow at a level he was loathe to examine; and the way Vern looked pleased him, too: lithe and large-eyed, almost tiny, almost delicate. "One thing you can say about Vern," he liked to repeat to his friends, "nobody would ever worry about *him* raping his daughter!" And when he said daughter, he would think of the girl in the black raincoat, whose name he did not permit himself to remember. She could have been no more than eighteen; his older son was twenty-three.

"I don't believe she wears *anything* under that black raincoat," he would say. "She sits in the front seat and crosses and uncrosses her legs and they're bare as far as I can see them, and I can see a damn sight farther than is good for a man my age."

"You ain' old, Prof," Vern would say. "You in youah previous prime."

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"She never takes it off winter or summer, cold snap or chinook," Professor Snow would insist. "When she bends over, and she's always dropping something, pencil or chocolate bar or class schedule, *so's* she can bend over, there's nothing but white all the way up."

"White," Vern would repeat; and "Excuse me," Professor Snow would say, but he always forgot himself into *that* trap.

"I believe she's trying to *excite* me," Professor Snow would conclude. "Deliberately."

"That's the way them white chicks is," Vern would comment; and Professor Snow, looking to the janitor for approval would summarize, "Once an o-fay, always an o-fay, right?"

At which Vern would shout in approval, "Prof, baby, you a niggah, too." And turning to leave, he would touch the Professor on the shoulder or upper arm.

Yet Professor Snow was disconcerted to hear Vern breathing at the door the night the girl in the black raincoat came to his office just before eleven, breathing hard too, because, she explained: she just had to know exactly what Sartre meant by *le néant,* and she was sure she would have just missed him, the Professor, she meant; and she was so *happy* he was there, she meant, *here*. . . It was confusing to listen to the two breathings, one of which, he was sure, indicated passion; but how could he tell which?

He was not aware of the moment at which he decided to assault her, to tug away the tightly belted coat, thinking of the tiny inflexible breasts, the hard flat belly scarcely indicated by a navel, the *Y* of her thighs and underbelly scarcely shadowed; yet he was not surprised to discover Vern beside him, tugging at one lapel even as he tugged at the other. He could not really believe, however, that it was "No, Prof, don' do it!" that the Negro shouted; for it seemed to him that Vern's face was flushed (but how could it be flushed?) with the passion that mottled his own. Perhaps it was the girl who cried.

Except that it was not the girl, at all; but, he could see—in the moment before the parchment film of skin that held them broke apart, and the bones which had moved beneath the black raincoat scattered across the floor—the Dean of Women, to whom he had not spoken for nearly twenty years. "They are but *mummy* possessed," he quoted, discovering that he spoke to no one. Vern was gone.

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It had not been lust then which had bugged the janitor's eyes and slavered his lips; only jealousy. Jealousy! And knowing this, Professor Snow knew himself widowed forever, and bent to the lifelong task of fastening the bones back together into a semblance of life, as the survivor in a house of death bends to his game of solitaire.

II

"Are you sure you're looking for Humanities 102?" Professor Frost asked, for the girl in the black raincoat had dropped his course after the second day; and he had been able to see her afterwards only at a distance, scurrying across the campus with a motion of the hips that even far off and under cloth had moved him desperately. "But I hate her," he had reminded himself on those occasions, even as he was reminding himself now, "since in rejecting my course she has rejected Dante as well as me."

This time he managed to say aloud only "Dante" before the coat she had extended for an instant like demonic wings dropped and she was revealed, her back to him, of course, quite naked, as he had all along known her to be beneath the covering that concealed nothing. "Tomorrow I will begin my book on the *Vita Nuova*," he said, more dazzled by the delicate nodes of her spine than he would have thought, a little less moved by the pearl-pale buttocks. Oddly enough, he spoke aloud; and, almost overcome by embarrassment, remembered just in time that she had listened to not a word he said during the brief period she had sat before him in class. "Good," he said to himself, "excellent," and turned her around quickly, stepping back just in time to avoid being hit in the face (he crouched for the effort) by her large pallid breasts, the nipples like purple bruises. Even before he saw what he knew only after a baffled moment to be a Chastity Belt, he realized that he had forgotten forever the names of the three indistinguishable flat-chested women who had been up to the thirty-fifth year of his life his only mistresses.

"But how?" he asked, "what do I—"and followed her hand which pointed delicately to the tag dangling between her legs. She said nothing, and, indeed, he remembered he had never heard her speak. *"To open,"* the legend on the tag read, *"first move Lever A*

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until it is engaged at point B, then. . . ." He could not really make out the rest, for the print seemed idiotically to grow smaller; while vanity had kept him from fitting himself out with bifocals (at only thirty-five!) and besides, he had never been able to assemble anything, not even his first Erector Set, before which he had sat in stupid joylessness until his father had left the house enraged (on Christmas!); and his mother, sobbing, had taken him into her arms.

Nonetheless, this time he meant to try; and he flung the girl to the floor, pressing his black-rimmed glasses up close against the flapping tag and manipulating the bolts and levers of the Chastity Belt with trembling fingers. He did not pause, even to wipe his dripping brow, until the bell rang for his twelve o'clock class (he preferred teaching to eating with the students in the loud and seedy commons), and picking up his books, he moved deliberately out into the corridor.

It was not until his students whooped in helpless laughter, nudging each other and pointing at his middle, that he realized his fly was still open.

III

Dr. Willowaw had never enjoyed entering Humanities 103; on the other hand, leaving it was always a pleasure, for it seemed to him a prison cell, a hospital room, a tomb; and leaving it, he felt himself simultaneously pardoned, healed and resurrected. It was not the place, indeed, which he would have picked himself for what he was still old-fashioned enough to think of as a "tryst" with the girl in the black raincoat; it was her idea and, he supposed, part of the pattern of subduing an environment she hated, triumphing over the academy. She had seduced, he assumed, a large number of her professors before him; and would doubtless seduce many more after him. He wondered only, and that vaguely, whether she were working an ascending series in age and rank—having begun with the twenty-year old assistants—or a descending one, having started with certain venerable deans whom he named to himself with some amusement. He himself was fifty-three but still an Assistant Professor (he had never even imagined the book which his colleagues at least pretended to be about to start or in which they

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claimed to be bogged down). "I am an odd case, hard to categorize,"—he told himself, a little pleased.

Nonetheless, he had enjoyed the casual pre-seduction, nearly three months of it, in which they had begun pretending to talk about sex; but which had really been a jockeying to see who would conquer whom. It was typical of Professor Willowaw that he talked of "conquests" rather than "lays," as he gathered it was now considered fashionable—even delicate—to do. He did not, in fact, care who was whose conquest; but he suspected that it might matter very much to a young lady of perhaps twenty-two or twenty-three.

The last time she had come to his office for a "conference" (she was auditing his course in Catullus), he had slipped a hand into the V of her raincoat and had fondled a moderately convincing breast—though to be sure, one tautly contained in a brassiere he had been surprised to discover she wore. He had always thought of her epicene shape as needing no support, had relished the way in which it merely suggested not asserted her femaleness under the, after all, rather ambiguous raincoat. And this time, he told himself, slipping the coat first down to her waist, then all the way to the floor, he must—if he would avoid discourtesy—come to the climax. Scarcely noticing what he did, he turned her away from him, to unbuckle her *soutiengorge* (he began always at this point to describe his actions to himself in French) and to salute, chastely, her *cul.* But when he turned her to face him once more he was mildly disconcerted to discover her after all a male, in an indifferent stage of excitement. For an instant, he considered the effect of a dramatic outcry; then dismissed it as unworthy of his level of civilization; and murmuring, *"Tant pis!"* knelt before the now discovered boy as if in prayer.

IV

For Mike Manger the supreme indignity of his life in the University was the location of his office (Humanities 104) at the end of a long corridor filled with men who called themselves "Doctor" or "Professor." That he was a writer three published novels attested; and he had long since got past the snobbish point (after, he guessed, the appearance of his first book) when he in-

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sisted on his embarrassed students calling him "Mike." "Mr. Manger" said it with a kind of austerity he now preferred to the studied roughness he had once affected under the influence of the Cult of Experience. He still wore a beard, to be sure, but a quietly academic one, he liked to think; not a black bush of masculine protest, nor a straggly ensign of conventional non-conformity. He no longer needed to screw his female student writers, either, possessing now not only a wife but also a mistress by whom he was almost equally bored; and having, too, a three-year-old daughter with whom he flirted atrociously to the horror of that wife, and, he hoped, the mistress as well.

That his female students (a) loved him, (b) wanted to sleep with an established writer to see if the charisma would wear off and (c) longed to be tickled just falling asleep or waking by a beard he assumed to be true; and brushed off their efforts to prove it to him. It would have pleased him to bug the Terrible Trio, Old Willowaw, Frost and Snow (he was a little older than Frost but kept young thinking of him in this way) with the sounds of sexual pleasure coming out of his office over the tick of their typewriters and the scratching of their pens; but it was hard to get hold of a girl anymore who asserted her satisfaction loud and clear, the way the survivors of the thirties, who had broken him in as a mere kid, had once done. The last couple of girls he had tried had, as a matter of fact, approached their climaxes (if any) so silently, so secretly that for a little while he had even thought of himself as slipping.

The girl in the black raincoat was another matter, however: so always belted up; so flat in the belly and behind, despite the heavy cloth of her coat; so cool of eye and tight of mouth, with no hint of sexual swagger or naive teen-age allure, that he had thought: "For Christ sake, she's like me. Sure enough of what she is to play it cool. Nothing to prove." And he had found himself moist in the mouth and weak in the hams thinking it. But this was the way each of his books had begun, he remembered, as he could only remember when a new one was about to begin: always with a new girl; but she had to be really *new*.

And this one *was*, he could see, unbuckling and uncloaking her as she lay spread-eagled on the untidy heap of papers on his

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desk. She bucked just enough to make it worthwhile, pushing up against the hand at her white throat with which he held her down; and falling back again with a sigh that set the papers to whirling about them both. Her knees, drawn up at first against her belly, had relaxed; and she spoke, he realized, for the first time (but when had he held her thus before?), still more sighed then spoke, urging him on, "Yes. Now. *Now,* please. Yes."

For a moment, however, he stood astonished, almost paralyzed, gazing down at her body, white where limbs and neck had shown, white as frost or snow but warm with a heat that smote his face bent toward a never consummated kiss; and black in belly and hams and upper thighs, black as the coat she wore; as if its color had seeped indelibly into her flesh, or else these parts had burned to cindery blackness in their own internal fire. White where visible, black where concealed: he felt, bemused, that not he alone (but surely he as well as all the rest) had longed but had not dared to dream her so; and reaching out to touch her where the darkness of her blackness was tenfold black, found himself saying, "Oh America, my new found land."

The last word was a snore; and he hung between waking and sleeping just long enough to know himself weary, weary, too weary ever to . . . to know that he had been, after all, all the rest: Frost and Snow and Willowaw, Willowaw and Frost and. . . . To know that, weary with their weariness, he slept.

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VISIONS FROM THE RAMBLE

Gracefully touching hands, the three lost, tiny pools
Laughed across open lips of rock between their basins,
Fringed by the dancing late spring grass that barely moved
To the wind's secret music, to the soft, semi-brave
Flashing of sparrows from the glistening mica phrases
Of the gray margins. Gracing all this, the laughter, the sound of
Laughter from where the waters poured from each pool's face
Away toward its sisters, coursed always gently downward,
Then finally vanishing underground.

From that high, quiet summit, somewhere above the tired,
Parched slope of Burns's Lawn, no voices and no dancing
Of water came; not even in winter, when the thin, bright
Ice snapped like shining foil underfoot, and a trickle chattered,
Almost as if remembered only from louder splashings;
Almost as if in dream, when the wind's secret silence
Flares up as it did in Avignon when the huge sad swans
Imponded in the high park, were frozen somehow, wildly,
Last winter in the unheard-of ice.

Even in winter, when that slope was always called
Eagle Hill, for the flexible flights of children
Shouting down towards the drive, when bare bushes enforced
No secrecy at the top of the hill, the pools still hid.
Unbidden, once, I crept with my sled through drifts and thickets
And saw the three asleep, still holding hands beneath
The bluish ice. Imprisoned? No more than my eyes, which, stinging
With wind and tears of glare, I lidded down, relieved
For a dark minute of what I'd seen.

The Ramble is the section of Central Park south of the Seventy-ninth Street transverse and north and east of the Lake. From parts of it, none of the surrounding city is visible.

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High, high above so many rocks they seemed to lie:
Deep back into the park, beyond the places of
So much adventuring: on chasms of schist, split by
Sheer blows of archaic force, we clambered toward the sun
And dared and chose or sulked alone and sometimes wondered.
Back toward the Ramble, there, like a hidden garden,
The three of them, ringing the sunlight reflected in their flood
In full spring, dancing, remain beyond the reaches of darkness.
The ponds, the three, have they departed?

I sought them once in the summer; remembering treacheries
Of remembrance, how what never occurred can usurp the true
Event's privileges, warned that they might not be there,
I climbed upward, in June's more distant margin, through
Tangles of greeny brush towards the places they used
To lie among—past where the twisting path that each winter
Revealed as Snake Hill, white, dangerous and cruel,
Clung to the curving rise, tender, asphalted, innocent,
Black, in the green of summer's wisdom.

And there they were, still braiding together the rippling water,
Leaping into view as I parted a budding hedge
Like some famous painting one finally sees, abroad,
At the end of a great corridor, bound with a connection
Stronger than merely the old rope of total resemblance
To the reproductions of it one had always known.
As, leaping into view, three graces, dancing, bending
Naked arms in a circle of girl, redeem the mere hopes
That art books' intimations spoke.

And there they were: the unroaring water flashed silver,
And high, hot light shot up from the three shallow bowls,
Surfaces gently amove, one to another spilled:
One giving, one accepting, one returning that flow,
The benefits of the surface, light and awareness thrown
Off them, through the eye, to the overseeing mind—
And all this happening with barely a trace of motion
Across their faces, as if the world had too much light
Ever to mirror in water shining.

As if the three must be forever almost still,
Fixed like an image so well known that memory
Need never reanimate it even for an instant,

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There they were, unchanged, confirmed in their present selves.
Or again: once in another summer, crossing Westward,
I entered the Park by an unfamiliar gate, and mounted
A fair rise, crashed through brush, took a wrong path, and ended
Up on that eminence of old at a late, late hour,
    Surprised by a distant sound of shouting—

A child's, on Eagle Hill, below my vision—and there
They were, barely enclosed in their modest, open room,
Gaily shaded by hedges interlaced carelessly
With the lowering sunlight. Taken, those unastonished pools,
By surprise, by the wrong approach, they lay as if unperused,
More like themselves than ever, all immediate surface
And rippled whorls of reflection shimmering as if newly
Glimpsed, free of deceit, free of perspective's absurd
    Draperies; smiling; and yet concerned.

And all was silence, save for the roaring of the world
In its turning. As once, not long before, the same smiling
Silence hung in the air around my head, unheard,
While far away beyond the bath-houses the wild
Surf slapped out its breath against the beach with sighs
And long, gasping diastoles; for there, before
My wearied eye at the knot-hole, ringed with noon's high sunlight,
The three undressing girls stopped for a moment, awed
    By the quiet air and the sun and all.

And there, there, there they were, grouped in the narrow locker
Within my breathless ring of vision, unbroken circle
Of heads averted, stretched arms, and all motions stopped,
One from the rear, the others facing me and turned
Gently inward, the gleam of skin and shadow of fur
Giving of all their surfaces, phenomena generous
Beyond deserving, as if the good one did were served
With double return, as if one could face the benefit,
    The moments of light now, the given present.

But all in an instant becomes the past, the intermittent . . .
The given is withdrawn. Whether a meteor trail
A following streak of fire or of searing after-image,
Our very glimpse of it consumes what should remain;
Cumulonimbus gatherings aloft in the blue fail,
Falling in the wind, into senseless blobs of cotton;

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Tears dissolve a moment into what hearts can make
Merely memorable, perhaps precious, or even solemn—
A source turned off, a cycle stopped.

And, as the sad rain, falling at four o'clock in the morning
Renews the half-lit hollow streets, and curling smoke,
Emerging from deep beneath shining surfaces, calls
Only losses to mind, only the last sigh-blown
Touch betwixt cloth and skin, only the last condoling
"See? We've really lost nothing tonight, because life
Is much too complicated," only the leaving, and only
Then the continuing rain outside, barely brightening
Streets, just darkening hearts, finally—

So with the clear-eyed world, freshly washed of vision.
Three naked girls in the shadows of noon, three shallow basins
Open to all the weathers, fall away into flickering
Points of memory, their substance consumed, their surface aflame.
They burn, they burn! So in winter once, I began to trace
Them out again by another unfamiliar route;
Thinking again to regain the withdrawn, the radiant spaces,
The flowered moments and points of joy, I sought my pools,
Cold at my shoulders, the wind, pursuing.

Cold at my feet, the hard, dry ground at the fringe of the Ramble.
Here all the surrounding city is hidden; even in winter
When gray mists seem to condense in bare, unfocused branches,
None of the heights of buildings ringing the park is visible.
There where the intricate paths, crossing themselves and twisting
Mazy configurations out of the asphalt walks,
Was the heart of the Park, with its dells and bridges over the inlet;
There was the final garden, full of the planned disorder
Of the garden regained, forced and sprawling.

Cold at my heart, the climbing slowly west and upward,
Away from one Museum with a painted past behind me
Toward the other's boundless pictures—cases of animals stuffed
From which I learned to read all landscapes and to climb
Inside all painted prospects, into their hidden lives.
Cold at my ears, I moved toward the huge, dark halls
Of skull-formed Africa where I had roamed, in childhood,
A wondering traveler along those mental shores;
Cold at my eyes, I walked and walked.

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And there they were, but not as they had been remembered,
Two hardly distinguishable, the third dried-out and muddy,
Misshapen clumps of puddle, they lay, a visionary
Disaster, before me, my eyes bleared and my heart fluttering—
As if the recollected surfaces had sunk
Down into crusty sockets of earth, ringed with sparse and
Dried-out grass, the given presence absorbed by dull,
Treasureless mines that the thirsty, chilling present park's
    Ground all had come to, dark and hard.

Mud at my heart, I could only stare, then turn to the east and
Vanish into the Ramble, losing the misplaced
And badly recollected pools behind me, even
As the city itself was hidden behind the narrow frame
And binding horizons of trees and underbrush. I made
My way across the cold, unfeeling paths that twist
About through the real distances, and finally came
Out of the park, into the unmistakable city
    Safe for the heart, because unenvisioned.

—Not like some misremembered loveliness of trees
Bare, for instance, of leaf in misty February:
Their blackish filaments, plane behind plane, receding
Into the general and dissolving gray, are melted
Down to remembrances of branches, to negatives,
To losses. I coughed in the fumes of traffic, as around me
Windows and parking-lights and other presences
Emitted a world I was hardly grateful for. It crowded
    Behind my eyes in that darkening hour.

As if the pools had vanished into the unabsorbent
Ground, I would avoid for months and months thereafter
The eminence they'd lain upon, now always courting
Other corners of path and bench and brush, the Ramble
Springing to green and filling the sky's borders with splashes
Of decoration. Down in some dirty dale, all hunched
Into a fading bench, time after time I sat
Brooding over the few pictures of those sunken
    Pools I had kept untorn and uncluttered.

And once I walked toward where I pictured them separated
By clumps of protecting privet, emerging, as once ascended,
In tiers, first one, then, hidden, the second giving way

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Immediately to one more, facing off to the west.
Having gained the last height there, I turned toward the setting
Sun, behind the pairs of towers that guard the rim
Of the visible—the modernistic CENTURY, the stubby MAJESTIC,
And gold-painted SAN REMO, and uptown at the edge of vision,
EL DORADO's pinnacles springing

Skyward, —then penetrate the great blue open room
Where all the sunsets burn; downward they disappear
In unseen chambers of bedrock; outward, already ruins
Of a wild, recent time, evoking all their fearful
Doubles in Moscow; branchless stumps ringing a clearing
In irony's forest. But inward, they glow in the dying sun
To cauterize the minds that make them matter and give
Them meaning: all the sad, ugly towers, mortared with mud,
Moribund, crumbling into dust.

Even at dawn, even at fairer moments than these
Glimpses out at the boundaries of all this ruined garden
Reveal a city to be achieved, the towers unreal,
The glittering windows unapproachable, the far
Finials and fretwork lifted almost to the stars
Beyond even their own vulgarity, beyond
The gestures of aspiration that left them scattered, sparkling
At all the irrational hours, hung high, but yet unpromised
There where only the eye can follow.

Once even at the false sunset inside the plated dome
Of the Planetarium, when night falls far too soon,
The bungled silhouetted mockups of all those
Surrounding towers, unbelievable and crude,
Taught me to watch the slower vanishings at the true
Rim of the park at dusk. At dusk in our present time,
Too, we learn of our sick condition: the senseless, the cruel,
The angry and the deprived roam through the lack of light,
Smashing the benefits long denied them.

So frowning violence reassumes the crowded land,
And silently, as afternoon unfolds its shades,
Boys with corrupted terriers wander among the Ramble's
Winding and convoluted walks. In the terminating
Spring's convulsive heat, shouts drift up, then fade
Over the nearby water, and even to have remembered

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Light leaping up like laughter from three surfaces, breaking
Out of those lost ponds into the shining air, is a blessing.
Have I a right to demand their presence?

I must deserve such benefits, such pools of water, such frail
Surfaces of delight, whether remembered by
Mistake, or really received, deserved not by laboring
Merely, but by a readiness of the heart to accept such fine
Gifts of phenomena. To what have I been entitled?
A loan of three ponds, perhaps. A gift of light over snow
In the glare of December sun. A solemn launch, gliding
Among rowboats. Discoveries of love on dark October
Benches beneath smashed lamppost globes.

—To a glimpse more precious, even, than those of goldenmost towers.
When, once at hide-and-seek, by a path that ran below
The crown of hill engemmed with ponds that I'd not found
Out for myself yet, I pushed through a hedge of broken
Privet and fell headlong against the concrete and oaken
Bench, where a tall fat man I now guess was thirty-five
Or thereabouts, was stretched, brooding, with his whole
Length extended along the bench, his head supported
Not with his palm, along the jaw,

But on his wrist and the back of his hand, his fingertips
Continuing past his chin; and he lay on his left side
And watched me as I rubbed my scraped brow with my mitten.
And from where I stood, I read on his face the kind of smile,
Awkward, a little strained, that one can often find
In mirrors; and as the wind blew dead leaves on the path
Tangling his long, untidy hair, I turned, and behind me
He lay there motionless. I felt him bless me. I ran
Away from the vision behind my back.

What did he see, that lying man? A boy, running
Down along an airless path between scrubby trees?
Three silent children playing in a ring, then? Something
Utterly different, rising behind his eyesight weeks
Later and then forever? For whatever he had received,
Oh let him have been thankful, even as I am now:
It is a garden we fall from; a city, somehow, we feel
That we have been promised, though not a city built to surround
A park, a remembered past like ours;

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It is a garden inside a city I will have remembered,
And three small pools I will remember having imagined
As gracing the top of an undistinguished eminence
Not too high in that park. Lying now in the grass,
Cool in the light of July on a green sward long past
Burns's Lawn, we fasten our tired gaze, she and I,
Across the trees to the west, framing our world in a vast
Moment of stillness. This night, this newly darkened sky,
    This scarred park rolling out behind us,

Even this city itself, are ours, wholly unshared
Because unremembered except by both of us, who have made
Light come into darkness, graces dance on a bare
Hilltop, a cycle of months spin around on a frail
Wheel of language and touch. O see the light! As a blaze
Of cloud above the western towers gleams for an instant
Up there! Firing the sky, higher than it should be able
To reach, a single firework launched from the unseen river
    Rises and dies, as we kiss and listen.

John Hollander

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Harold Rosenberg

ART AND WORK

The prospect for the arts is bound up of course with the direction of the culture as a whole. There are many people who have a rather rosy picture of America's artistic future. In contrast to such an outlook, there is an opinion, apparently growing in strength, that the way things are going the arts have *no* future. We live, we are being told constantly, in a scientific and technological civilization which is systematically reducing man to the most primitive appetites and functions. Cultural decline used to be the theme of European romanticists and Americans visiting the great Renaissance cathedrals. Since the war, novelists, playwrights, thinkers, both here and abroad, have been competing with one another in finding the absolute symbol with which to represent the nonentity of the modern person. He has been dramatized as rubbish in a trash can—and as a volunteer rhinoceros. Philosophers have written volumes on loss of the self, and when committed by modern man even the most unspeakable crimes have been held to be "banal."

An element in this mood has no doubt been the memory of the Nazi death camps and the threat of nuclear war. But the dark prophecy of the fall into subhumanity antecedes Auschwitz and Hiroshima. Indeed it is customary to see these atrocities as effects of the current human condition rather than as its initiators. The true source of the man-made disasters of the twentieth century lies, the philosophers of fall inform us, in what the advance of technology has done to man himself. This is another way of saying that the so-called decline of man has to do with the subject of this Congress*—that is to say, with the crafts. To many of the critics of contemporary civilization the practice of the crafts is the

* EDITOR'S NOTE: "Art and Work" is an expanded version of a talk Mr. Rosenberg gave, entitled "Vistas in the Arts," at a session of The First World Congress of Craftsman (1964).

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activity by which the human creature is defined. Man is a maker, *homo faber,* an artist. Put this proposition in reverse—when man ceases to be a maker he is no longer man—and our present crisis is explained. The fall began not in Eden, when man was condemned to labor, but in the nineteenth century when the machine first threatened him with leisure. With "soulless manufacture," as Ruskin called it, turning out endless quantities of copies of objects to which the human touch was alien, man-the-maker commenced to lose his skills and with them his dignity and independence. He was converted into an atom of mass society, a unit of energy susceptible of being put to use for any purpose —and to being replaced by other energy units generated from nature.

The dissolution of the human essence based on man's handling of materials now reaches its climax in automation by which even the most rudimentary operative skills are eliminated. In regard to man as a tool-using fabricator the outlook is thus one of absolute blackness. He may preserve his skills out of sentimentality, and even revive abandoned ones, but these exercises no longer have a role in the serious realm of necessity and can no longer hold the human being to an ultimate definition.

If the arts are identified with the crafts—and they can never be altogether detached from them—their role too is in doubt. This doubt pervades the art of the past hundred years and is the essential content of the advanced writings and paintings of the half-century since the First World War. Our time has given birth to the concept of the last artist. His work takes the form of reducing to zero the tradition of skillfully contrived objects. A splash or a ruled rectangle asserts the terminal proposition reached by the logic of art history. Then art and the artist are no more.

This doubting of the kind of making called art has turned up in all the arts. Under the name of anti-art it has exerted a constantly revolutionizing influence. It has resulted in the endeavor to carry art beyond fabrication into the realms of action and revelation. In painting and the drama it has caused the psychology of the gesture and the metaphysics of the void to emerge as keys to form. The symbol of art in which making has reached its last gasp is the work of the New York painter who literally conceives art as an all-black picture, which he repeats in a uniform size, shape and surface: five feet wide, five feet high, five thousand dollars. This artist could announce if he chose, "I have met the machine and it is I."

I should like to be able to prove that the prophecy of mechanized man and the death of the arts is baseless. As against aristocrats who lost

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everything when their handicraftsmen went into the factories and the ideologues who became disillusioned when the workingmen ceased to be an object of commiseration, my interests put me on the side of equality and of plenty of free time for all, such as cultures based on the crafts could not allow. As to art, the masterpieces of modern music, painting, literature are not to my mind mere shadow images of a megalopolitan spiritual desert.

Still, some kind of deterioration in the quality of people, their behavior and their products does seem to be taking place. This may be an effect of transition. Yet bureaucracy is growing and the arts are by no means immune to it. The man who handles and shapes the materials, be they leather or steel, or words, paint, or sounds, has less and less control over the use to which his product is put, including its intellectual use. The artist is isolated from his public by the very processes and institutions through which his work is brought before it. The larger the influence exerted by his work the less that influence communicates the idea or sense of things embodied in the work itself.

All we have on the positive side is the individual's capacity for resistance. Resistance and criticism. Most modern masterpieces are critical masterpieces. Joyce's writing is a criticism of literature, Pound's poetry a criticism of poetry, Picasso's painting a criticism of painting. This art also criticizes the existing culture.

Because it lives through criticism, modern art cannot be used as an argument to prove the case in favor of modern times and modern man. Like the art of all periods, it has the characteristics, including the negative characteristics, of the culture in which it was created. One who hates the modern world will find its most odious qualities mirrored in Joyce or Picasso, and will see only disintegration, distortion and the absence of form and nobility.

In sum, vis-à-vis the past, the future and its creations are, to say the least, in question. When labor is no longer needed, or when its character as machine-tending has reached its ultimate—for example, when work consists of watching lights flash on and off and pressing a button when something goes wrong—when the use of skill in production is no longer even a rarity, changes in mankind of the profoundest magnitude may be postulated. All relations between man and nature, as well as between the individual and himself, will be transformed in unimaginable ways. Whether one considers this to be the bottommost point of human history or its height, one thing is certain: that the values of the future, including its esthetic values, are all in the making. We may be headed toward a society of dehumanized robots or toward a community of intellectual

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Supermen. But whatever be the outcome, the arts cannot be expected to carry on as they did before the industrial age. And even works produced in earlier epochs are bound to appear in a state of alteration and serve different functions from those they did in their own time.

A situation so drastic will, naturally, tend to generate extreme ideas. Given the forecast of Everyman as an utterly passive consumer inhabiting a vast supermarket that fills up automatically each morning with synthetic goodies, it is not absurd to retort with the prophecy of Everyman as creative artist. The effect of universal automation must be to make geniuses of us all—as an alternative to converting us into amoeba-like digestive apparatuses. There is evidence, of course, that both conditions are in the process of being realized—which means, of course, that neither can be.

For the purpose of this discussion, I shall therefore assume that history will continue to behave like history; that is, that it will bring forth everything except what is logically expected of it. With history as history, the vista consists of a mixup of the new and the old, of the outworn, the revived and the original. Thus the development of art in the decades to come will tend to parallel the three major phases of production in general: the crafts, scientific technology, free creation (including improvisation, games, totems). I shall comment on these briefly in relation to art today.

In much of contemporary painting and sculpture, art retains its ancient tie with the crafts. Reacting against machine-produced copies of things, art functions as a workshop for fashioning handmade ornaments and pushing forward possibilities in design. In this approach the fine artist and the inventive craftsman are indistinguishable from each other. It is regrettable that an inherited hierarchy of terms makes it more desirable to be called an artist than an artisan—for instance, much of the fuss about Pop art has been due to the ignorance among critics and curators of what is being done in advertising and in the display industry. For an art historian to justify his admiration for Lichtenstein by praising the latter's draughtsmanship is laughable—as if the art departments of Madison Avenue and Hollywood were not full of the prize students of America's art academies. (To appreciate Lichtenstein's contribution to the art gag is something else.) That the painter or sculptor creates a single object rather than a model for machine production is not in itself sufficient to distinguish his work from that of the designer-craftsman in the automobile or space industry or in "the communications." The enormous improvement in techniques of reproduction in art further

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decreases the significance of the handmade as such in determining what is and what is not art. In their originals both artist and craftsman preserve the quality of the human touch and a control of their materials more flexible than that of the machine.

What defines art as craft is placing the emphasis on the object and its qualities, to the exclusion of the personality of the artist, his unique consciousness, his dilemmas. For instance, since Leonardo, painters have consciously made use of accident to arouse suggestions that would either help them to begin a painting or to redirect it during its creations. Certain effects of accident in modern art—splashes, runs, etc.—are now used by potters to enhance their surfaces. The accident is induced for the sake of what it does to the appearance of the object, rather than as an element in the artist's thinking and feeling: it becomes a category of decoration and a technical device. But painters in the last few years have also been using accident in the same way, that is, not as part of a searching or imagining effort but in order to obtain a certain look. With the intellectual-emotional motive eliminated, so is the difference between the painter and the potter.

There is nothing in art that cannot be reduced to inconsequence if understood in how-to-do-it terms. Like accident, "painterliness" ceases to be a virtue in the hands of a recipe reader. But by the same token so does non-painterliness. Feeble painting can be done in pigment an inch think or in a wash as thin as the reasoning of certain art critics.

Today, in connection with Pop and Gag art and various kinds of pattern-making abstraction in painting, there is much talk of an "anonymous" approach to art. This "new" idea reasserts the aboriginal relation of the craftsman to his product, a relation of skill in making an object for use. Under present-day conditions anonymous art can be nothing else than a euphemism for commercial or industrial art brought into cultural areas formerly occupied by serious work. Art of the anonymous type, and the attitudes that produce it, may be expected to appear under any social conditions that provide a market for visual novelty and ornament.

The link of art with the crafts will persist no doubt as a force in art criticism and education. Regardless of its mode of creation, any work of art, even the most expressive or exploratory, can be interpreted as a fabrication and judged in terms of the recipes by which it achieves its effects. Criticism seems to be much slower than art itself in casting off the spell of Greek and Latin terms that identify the poetry and the artist with making and the maker.

The merger of the studio and the workshop goes back to the begin-

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nings of human history. Since the Renaissance the studio has also been linked with the laboratory. The use of art to investigate nature led almost from the start to investigation of the means of conducting that investigation—for example, study of perspective as a system for apprehending the physical world. The research of art into its own means has constituted a powerful motive in modern painting, poetry, music, the novel, the theater. In our century artists have often emphasized these means as part of the content of the work itself—as in the exaggeration of brush strokes in painting, or in making the composition and acting of the play part of the plot of the play itself.

Research into the means falls roughly under two heads: 1) experimenting with the formal elements of the art in question—space, scale, and color relations, in painting, non-metrical rhythms in poetry; 2) free play with the characteristic materials employed by each art—for example, pigment, sound, words; 3) the introduction of new raw materials, such as found objects in sculpture or street noises in music.

There can be little doubt that art will continue to experiment with the means of art and with the independent capacities of these means to simulate nature and evoke esthetic response.

Perhaps the latest among the conscious interests of art is the formative effect of its creative processes upon the artist himself and upon his audience as individuals. Free work, whether in the studio, the workshop, the laboratory or the industrial plant, is work done because the worker wants to do it, when he wants to do it, how he wants to do it. It is done not in obedience to external need but as a necessity of the worker's personality. It is work for the sake of the worker, his means of appropriating nature and the heritage of other men's ideas and skills—thus his means of developing himself.

Faced with the dissipation of local cultures and the mass recruitments of modern industry, art has found in its own practices the discipline for a continuous formation of individuality, as well as a direct means of communion with artists of other times, places and cultures. Art aimed at self-creation has thus been inseparable from awareness of man's changed relation to production. Conversely, this historical consciousness has led art in our time toward an increased subjectivity. As against art conceived as the making of attractive objects, or as the vision of things as they are or are believed to be, history-conscious art has isolated in painting or in poetry the psychic experience of creation. It is art for making artists. In that it seeks to change the quality of living it is art that is political in the deepest sense—as contrasted with propaganda art which delivers preconceived messages through craftsman-like presentations. At

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the same time, it reawakens the primitive motive of art as magic and celebration. In work inspired by this new-old motive, art goes against its past as a making of things and takes on the characteristics of action. At the same time it preserves the essence of artisanship through its respect for the traditional media and its need to keep them alive as sources of suggestion. Thus art today continues to supply models for the crafts at the same time the latter often take on the gratuitous quality of art.

Whether or not art for the artist's sake will remain an important strain in the future depends on the strength of our will to individual independence and social freedom. Art as craft and, to a lesser degree, art as experiment, can function under any social system. Art as action, however, is the offspring of this revolutionary epoch and can flourish only so long as individuals are determined to be responsible for their own development and to interpret the past in relation to this aim. The ideal vista for the future is clear: it is that self-development shall be the motive of all work. If that ideal prevails, the distinction between the arts and other human enterprises will become meaningless.

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HERE AND THERE

LONDON

After we got home at the end of August, the fine summer declined into a warm, mellow fall, and early one wonderful morning a truck driver saw from the road what looked like a head sticking out from the hedge. When he investigated, he found a schoolboy, who had been missing for a day or two from Bryanston. The boy was gagged, his hands were tied, and he had no feet. It seems he had lain all night across a railroad track, and an early train had cut off his feet. After that, he had crawled up a twenty-foot-high embankment and got his head through a gap. On the following day, with the boy recovering from these and further amputations, the police announced themselves satisfied, after enquiry, that no criminal proceedings were called for. Just across the Irish sea, in the Isle of Man—which happens to be my birthplace—more enquiries are going on into the case of a five-year-old girl who, it is alleged, was compelled by her parents to skip rope from nine till midnight evening after evening, her screams noted, doubtless with disapproval, by the neighbors; but the little girl died and the matter, as I say, is being looked into.

Good weather makes many of the English slightly drunk; we are like spinster aunts tippling at a wedding, and then the sun shines the next day and the next until we can't reduce the sun content in the bloodstream, and we are off on a bender with nothing any longer seeming important except the weather. But, as the footless boy and the tortured girl remind us, life goes on somewhere; the fantasies of the cruel come alive daily and tear at somebody's flesh. One of the big London events of the fall has been the Theater of Cruelty season at the Aldwych, and so far the hit is the play with the long title now known simply as *Marat/Sade*. This work, originally German but freely adapted for the Aldwych season, is about a performance, in the early years of the nineteenth century, of a play by de Sade about the assassination of Marat.

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The author is on stage, and frequently intervenes in the performance, which is given by the inmates of a lunatic asylum. Marat itches in his bath, the presenter gabbles in bright doggerel interspersed by more or less topical political cracks. Charlotte Corday, a beautiful melancholic, nearly gets the job done after five minutes playing time, but there are various entertainments by the way, including much pretty music and a chorus which repeatedly asks: "What's the point of a revolution/Without general copulation?" There are vast charades—a guillotine rattles (lunatic drawing an oil funnel across a grating) and thumps (lunatics drop a heavy table); a bucket of blue blood is poured away. De Sade is flagellated by Charlotte: the lunatics do the hiss of the whip, and she draws her long hair across his back as he jolts, writhes, and delivers a grunting philosophical monologue. Weiss was aiming at a cross between Artaud and Brecht; Peter Brook, we thought, adds a bit of Littlewood. As mere theater this is a tremendous evening, another work of genius (yes, I think so) by Brook. Yet the play is really not a good one; it is Brechtian without Brecht's sense of direction, a play of ideas in which the play and the ideas are dissociated with a fatal theatrical facility. When Weiss wants a debate about liberty, personal and political, between de Sade and Marat, he simply has the presenter or Herald come in and announce it. The action stops, the lunatics hold their lunatic poses, and the men talk and talk. A London audience, indifferent to the pious protests of certain London theatrical people, listened with obvious but unexcited pleasure. It was pretty typical of the modern West End audience, sleek again, expensive, professionally hard to shock. The play has a good ending, the players stonily clapping the audience out of the theater but then collapsing into all manner of naughtinesses until an assistant stage manager comes in and blows a whistle. Such cruelty as there is in the play is calculated on the cruelty of the audience, and it is not allowed to think of what it has seen as other than as an illusion. There was nothing that called for criminal proceedings. For all its revolutionary content *Marat/Sade* is strictly for the well-heeled, the unshockable new men. "We have fed the heart on fantasies," remarked Yeats; "the heart's grown brutal from the fare." *Mean* would be the appropriate word, perhaps.

This is called, by custom, a London Letter; but the return to England after a year in the U.S. was for me, because of my job, a return to Manchester rather than to London. We have our own kind of meanness in this vast and ugly North Midlands town; one notices it in the streets, in the farcically involved traffic, where people would rather hold you up, even at the expense of being held up themselves, than give

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an inch. Before the election, after the long hot summer which swung the polls nearly 20 percent in the Tory direction, it was easy to remember that in British political life the vice of the Left is more often an aspect of their ingenuousness, of vanity or frankness concerning power, than that of the Right, which is a kind of meanness. During the campaign there was a genuine fear on the Left that the last days would produce some trick, some Zinoviev letter. George Brown remembered the 1950 Labour administration, when there was a majority of six, and the Opposition suspended the normal courtesy of pairing in order to wear out the ministers, even when the occasion of the request was a necessary ministerial trip abroad. Harold Wilson's single slip in the campaign—a rash suggestion that a potentially disastrous strike was Tory-inspired—sprang from the same memories. In the end it was not a violent or angry campaign; but I am always impressed and alarmed in the moments when the British public is politically conscious, at the dangerous combination on the Right of upper-class arrogance and middle-class hatred for the worker; the first is a strange feudal survival, with a strong paternalist element, but the second is a fierce neo-Calvinism. Although it was the heckling of Home and Hogg that made the headlines, all the really vicious talk one heard in pubs seemed to come from people who might, by accent and manners, be thought to be of the working class, but who were anxious to prove their election. Across one poster, asking support for Leslie Lever, somebody scrawled the word "Christ-killer."

So that in the early days of the campaign one felt always like using the abbreviation "Con" and doing so with a French accent. The ministers were saying the economy was never better, and the Tory papers kept the news of the adverse trade gap low on page 6; meanwhile the Labour campaign was dull and hope lessening. At this point I had to go to Denmark, where a British Week had been organized, an agreeable device for selling things. Copenhagen, as everybody knows, is a handsome city, more like Paris than any other, perhaps, and full of good food, good furniture, and good ideas, like the long pedestrians-only shopping street across the center. The Tivoli was shut. Outside it was a facsimile British pub, and at no time of the day did I contrive to reach the counter. Denmark is unbelievably anglophile, which makes for a pleasant visit; the Danes are anachronistic in other agreeable ways, too, their manners gentle, subdued, Edwardian. One's host at dinner quietly and repeatedly drinks one's health; professors of English at the universities are always looking for lectors with British-English accents. There were plenty of these around; we represented our culture not only by the pub, London policemen in full fig, double-decker buses, marching pipers, and itinerant

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lecturers, but by the London Philharmonic, the Bristol Old Vic (all brought along on a shoestring budget) and by Princess Margaret and Lord Snowden.

Some of these goings-on I missed through being in Aarhus—the trip was worth it for the beautiful brick-Gothic cathedral, with the most delightful wall-paintings *al secco* and, in the Danish fashion, a great time-battered ship-model hanging from the roof. But I did see the Old Vic *Henry V*. This is a good play only insofar as its jingoism is subtly uneasy, but a huge audience loved it (at its first ever Danish performance) and even understood and laughed at the jokes—everybody speaks English, nobody will speak German. The actors were astonished and delighted that all the royals, British and Danish, showed up, although they had been to *Love's Labour Lost* the night before. This may be the first time a British royal has seen Shakespeare on two successive nights. The Princess is a great professional, it must be admitted, and does the job with much unaffected gaiety and no stiffness. She applauded like mad. Another day she had the kind of assignment royals are for. A wartime attempt by the R.A.F. to bomb Gestapo headquarters in Copenhagen went wrong when a plane crashed on a school; the other bombers took the flames as a marker, attacked the school, and killed over 80 children. It was sensible not to ignore this in British Week, and the Princess was right for the job.

All we have to get now is the same order of professional achievement in the export business. If we can't sell to the Danes we can't sell to anybody. They like us, still think that British goods are of superior quality, and prefer English cars to Volkswagens. But I heard several gentle complaints about the difficulty of *getting* things; which is partly why we have adverse trade balances. We use huge quantities of Danish bacon and butter. Incidentally, the Danes are very strong on bread, cakes, butter, and other disastrous and delicious food. The S.A.S. flight from Copenhagen to Amsterdam, which takes an hour, served the best airborne food I have ever eaten, together with martinis, champagne and brandy; one felt oneself in the midst of an emergency operation designed to make one as fat and as drunk as possible before one got off the plane.

Back home the weather turned cold, and—who knows why?—the polls began a trend to Labour. They needed 3½ percent to break even, and Gallup gave it them; in the end, even N.O.P. came over to Labour, and they both turned out to be about right. If I had to guess at the reason, I should say it had nothing to do with Quintin Hogg, though it will be a bad day for Labour when he ceases to put the Tory case, and little to do with Sir Alec, who I imagine just about broke even, not

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doing well enough to win support, or badly enough to lose it. The reason was some faint stirring of a sense of social justice.

Americans may find it hard to care; from a distance our parties are Tweedledum and Tweedledee. Yet they do matter to us. The issue of deterrence may be to a considerable extent a bogus one; the electorate didn't pay much attention to it anyway. But the questions of steel and land speculation are very important indeed, and the country is deeply divided on them. And yet the strong feeling on the Left that this was the one we had to win had profounder causes than these. At the moment of choice, there dawns an understanding that the Tory party epitomizes most of what one knows to be wrong with England.

Bad weather on polling day is traditionally hard on Labour. In Stockport, our nearest big town, there was morning fog, and workers could not vote on the way to the factories. This was bad, but continuing rain was worse; the bulk of the socialist vote comes in the evening between about 7:00 and 8:30, and in the afternoon one saw the candidates' wives at headquarters looking anxiously out of the windows. At lunchtime my wife was heaven knows where, driving voters, so I had a pub lunch with Bill Webb, Literary Editor of *The Guardian*, another Stockport resident. With us was a young party worker with a C.N.D. background. He had heckled Home at his Stockport meeting, and been ejected with what he considered unnecessary violence; so he asked the official responsible for a chance to continue the argument. The man agreed, he said, and in accordance with their arrangement our companion went to Conservative headquarters for the second meeting; but all that happened was that his opponents called the police. They—so the allegation runs—removed him with equal briskness, as a photograph in the local press is held to demonstrate. A little later, *post* or *propter hoc* one cannot speculate, the police booked all the cars standing outside Labour headquarters, and an official enquiry is now in progress.

By seven we were ready for the final operation of flushing the Labour vote. No rain, but a damp industrial murk, enough to make driving a strain. My wife and I were sent to remote housing estates full of lurking, perhaps lazy, supporters. Every door has to be knocked at, every excuse overridden. A small fleet of cars was in action. Conversations on the way to the polling booth often suggested only a rudimentary degree of political information, but that was less important than the sense that there was only one way to vote. One woman said that earlier in the day she had been struggling uphill in the rain with a load of shopping and two kids, when a car stopped, and a lady Tory rolled

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down the window, shouting brightly, "Of course you're voting Conservative?" "I couldn't think of any words," said my passenger, "so I just yelled 'Arseholes!' and she put the window up quick." This is the social level where it is not considered smart and self-improving to vote Tory. A little higher up this notion lingers, as we often observed. Stockport is built in a hollow a few miles south of Manchester, and deep in this hollow is a nook used for political meetings and called the Bearpit. There, a few days before polling, Harold Wilson addressed, not very well I'm afraid, an enormous crowd, about 9000 according to the police. The man standing by me was a solid, amiable hatmaker. He must have sized me up as a Tory, and said, with some difficulty, "I don't mind admitting it, I vote Labour." My wife even found in the worst slums, which are very bad in Stockport, a pathetic attempt to gain prestige by voting Tory; and it must be that many millions of working-class people vote against themselves in order to feel classy. Yet Orwell was not as wrong as people say about the warmth and comfort of solid working-class life, nor about its gaiety. The social ease and ready laughter which one met again and again, and which is nonexistent in the English middle classes with all their poses to hold, prevailed also in the efficient committee rooms. Optimism grew; we took our last voter to the polls and went home to watch television with hope and fear.

Stockport, incredibly, had given both seats to the Conservatives for nearly forty years; the swing needed for a Labour win throughout the country was about 3.6 percent, and to achieve that swing both Stockport seats had to be won. It happened that the first true indication of a sufficient swing came with the Stockport results; both seats were gained. The rest of the story is the long agony of Friday, with everything depending upon a gain at Meriden (the geographical center of England). The swing needed was small, but the prosperity of the Midlands had throughout kept the Labour swing down, and in places—Smethwick, notoriously—this, with the feeling against West Indian immigrants, actually lost Labour seats. But Meriden came through, and Harold Wilson had his small majority. He went in at the front door of 10 Downing Street and Sir Alec left by the back. It has been a fantastic couple of days; it was as if our change of direction merely mirrored a world alteration, for there occurred more or less together the dismissal of Khrushchev, the Chinese bomb and the Jenkins revelations. On a lesser scale Wilson, like Attlee in 1945, takes office at a moment of national and world crisis. He will be like Attlee as Prime Minister, precise, unforgiving, honest. If he is given the space to move in he will probably make himself a more exciting cabinet before a year

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is out; at the moment Tories and Liberals say they will not harry him, but the disgust of the rank and file Tory is a different matter from the gentlemanly resignation of his leaders, and the pressure will tell one day. It is not to be expected that Labour will be forgiven its blunders as the Tories were; but they may be fewer and less disastrous. Certainly the element of the ludicrous which has marked British government since Suez will disappear. We may be in for a somewhat grim couple of years, but we shall learn to be less tolerant of injustice, less content to think that cruelty is illusory, readier to accept that proceedings are, in some things, necessary. And so, after all, and with weeks of doubt behind, one is glad to be back.

Frank Kermode

NEW YORK

New York is almost itself again: the World's Fair is gone till spring. Cabbies, waiters, doormen, shopgirls can forget the monster act engendered by months of tip-divvying, wooden-nickel-checking, finger-counting, and other tricks. Savagery and revenge mothered greater inventions than necessity ever could—new triangulations to catch noise at its loudest, draughts at their windiest, movement at its schizziest: the maitre d's way of getting even for the out-of-town voice calling out loudly, "And remember, captain, we're used to the best."

The Fair began with a disastrous confusion of word and inaction by Bronx and Brooklyn chapters of CORE—a threat to stall three thousand cars on various roads leading to the big show. A few days before the opening, demonstrators blocked a tollbooth at Triborough Bridge. An Italian laborer came out of his car swinging a wrench, swearing he'd kill anybody who kept him away from work. The CORE stall-in never did materialize: it did, however, produce resentment with no concomitant sympathy, or saving dramatic helicopter view of a

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killed the President, somewhere around 20,000,000 people *believed* he did *not*. Mark Lane had become a cultural focus: his nightly performances at the Jan Hus were titled "Who Killed [John F.] Kennedy?". On a Friday night I went.

The lecture was scheduled for 8:30 P.M. At 8:25 I took my seat, the only unoccupied one left in the house. People were still lined up at the box office, gathered outside (in rain) waiting, clustered together in the lobby. Inside the theater hundreds of people sat, lined the walls, filled the aisles, the standing-room areas at the back. At least half of them were high school age, or perhaps younger; a quarter more were college students, many of those, freshmen; a good showing of semi-hoods, beats, nineteen-thirties Village intellectuals, Chelsea Hotel thinkers, Seventh Avenue pressers, Negro and white lawyers and law students (one sat beside me), Lexington Avenue slummers, people in search of a "happening," made up the rest of the crowd.

I felt the excitement the moment I sat down, all around me and in myself. Here was the great tragedy of our lives. An assassination, an arrest, a botch, a killing, a man with the nickname of "Sparky" awaiting execution. Everything mad, everything jumbled, and here a talk titled with a question—*who, indeed.* Wasn't there a doubt—even the tiniest—in any reflective man's mind that Lee Harvey Oswald was the assassin, or, if not that doubt, then the one troubled by the conclusion that he acted alone? The charge to the Commission itself was an odd one: it had obvious doubts about the Dallas police, the F.B.I., and the Secret Service, and yet, what independent *investigative* body did it have at its command to do a disinterested analysis of the role played by those three policing bodies? And that peculiar remark of Chief Justice Warren—that there were aspects of the Kennedy assassination which could never be known *in our lifetime.*

At 8:30 the crowd at the back of the room moved forward. Ticket-takers and ticket-sellers squirmed their way in along the walls, found tiny ledges they climbed onto, and sat. The stage was as yet unlighted. Stage left was a dark white screen, rather small; stage right was a lectern, beside it a small table, all in shadow. People were still surging in through the rear door. The place was airless, damp with rained-on coats and umbrellas, noisy in a peculiar murmuring way. Schoolbooks were opened by those who didn't want to lose time. Great leonine old Village heads turned majestically to see what was going on, or who.

At 8:40 someone rushed on stage, turned on the lectern light, rushed out; a light glowed on the white screen, then went off. A small spotlight played on the lectern and table. Nothing happened. Some

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object was on the table, a gun, a rifle. Five minutes went by, ten, fifteen. The crowd squirmed, clapped a quick, good-natured, embarrassed rhythm of get-on-with-it, and subsided.

At 8:55 I confess I had a thought about Mann's Cipolla. People looked into each other's faces, shrugged, smiled, shook their heads in puzzlement.

At 9:00 Mark Lane came out. The applause was full and generous. He stood there, unsmiling (he smiled once all night, only after a few near-misses), a Columbia graduate student in dark-rimmed glasses, dark suit, dark tie, looking something like Arthur Miller's younger even sadder brother. He began to talk in a slow, dry, not lively voice, his style a curious compound of John F. Kennedy making a point to a cued-in group, and Mort Sahl having one of his bad, serious, high horse nights.

He began quietly. People said Mark Lane believed there had been a conspiracy; Mark Lane had never said there was a conspiracy. He wanted everybody to be clear about that. As far as he was concerned there was no proof that there had been a conspiracy. Rather than suggest there was a conspiracy he was addressing himself to something else again. The Warren Commission report was a prosecuting attorney's brief; he, Mark Lane, was Lee Harvey Oswald's defense attorney. He would show how material unchallenged and accepted in the Warren Commission report would be thrown out on the objection of a defense counsel, or rejected by any jury to whom the defense counsel addressed his arguments—Lane's arguments.

No, there was no conspiracy, and yet people maligned Mark Lane, misquoted or ignored him, refused him audience, badgered him, tailed him, tapped his wires—why, if there was nothing to hide? Why should anyone want to bother with Mark Lane and this simple thing he was dedicated to—unearthing the truth, the whole truth, regardless of whom it touched, about the assassination of President John F. Kennedy? Did people know Mark Lane was not only on the F.B.I.'s but also on the Immigration Department's *lists*?

"It's getting so bad that if I want the F.B.I. to know something I don't have to phone them—I can phone anybody."

The crowd applauded. A girl on the ledge whispered, "He's so wonderful, so brave, and so *subtle*."

Lane's villains he sketched in quickly—the media (by which he meant newspapers, magazines, television and radio) were at the top of the list, a fact of some peculiar interest at a time when the Goldwater faction and *National Review* were especially active working over

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city frozen by automotive martyrs. The Fair could have used something dramatic. Anything. All it had was the same old Moses (Robert) and the same old line about a Promised Land (parks he'd build out of the Fair's profits). And the same old blame-game when the first year of the Fair was a flop—highbrows and esthetic critics were Moses' villains.

An election year is a bad time for any other kind of circus. Bobby Kennedy arrived in New York. Moses should have done it with as much style. In spring Bobby was Attorney-General, his voting place was Massachusetts, Kenneth Keating was a senator, his reelection a cinch. This winter Bobby Kennedy is a resident of New York, and its junior senator. His campaign week by week grew into the movie cliché which has the young guy turn on the mob with a "from now on you mugs are workin' for *me*." One by one the bosses, gentle and tough, fell into line—generous Averell Harriman, and that nice guy, Robert Wagner. The ex-President's inner circle, now out in Washington, swung into New York; as far as anyone could make out during the campaign not only Bobby Kennedy but Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. was a New York resident. He worked "intellectuals" and "Temple Mr. and Mrs. Clubs" brilliantly. Bobby's image went from cold to hot; his ruthlessness (rumored) became his compassion (filmed); even asking for a fork in a pizza joint didn't harm him. Negroes didn't forget Bobby; many others didn't forget Bobby's brother. On his side Kenneth Keating had Governor Rockefeller, a dubious coattail-catch; Senator Javits came on TV and fixed the ideal *Yiddishe mama* with a half-cringe, half-smile, saying, "I want everybody who voted for me to vote for my good friend, Kenneth Keating." Not everybody did. As a friend of mine quipped when he heard Bobby had been elected: "Now the Kennedy's will have as many senators as a state."

There's a more somber side to the Kennedy matter in New York. All spring I had heard of Mark Lane's speeches and rallies throughout the city, around the country, and in Europe. People I respect have handed me sheets which convinced them that Mark Lane was one of the few people dedicated to finding out the truth about John F. Kennedy's death. "The bullets entered from the front," I heard, or "Lane has an eyewitness to the meeting of Jack Ruby, Bernard Weissman [the man who put the foul ad in the Dallas paper the day Kennedy was killed], and Officer Tippit."

After the Warren Commission report came out I decided to go to the Jan Hus Theater on East Seventy-fourth Street to see for myself what was happening. The most recent Gallup Poll showed that though 85 percent of the American people believed Lee Harvey Oswald had

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the same villains, "the media." He then did an analysis of the Warren Commission itself and, without touching on the Chief Justice himself yet, ticked off Russell, Boggs, etc., as either reactionaries or racists.

At 9:40 P.M. it was clear that if no conspiracy had existed against John F. Kennedy then one certainly did exist against Mark Lane. No "good guys" appeared in his speech to that moment; other than, I mean, the dead President, the dead and maligned Oswald, and the endangered Mark Lane.

The young man beside me was a law student at a Catholic university. He made notes.

"Listen," he whispered to me after Lane had talked an hour, "what do you think? He's got some good points, hasn't he? What's he got to gain by this otherwise? Only I wish he'd get to the points of law. I hear he makes a good case."

Lane's pace suddenly quickened. A map of the parade route in Dallas was illuminated; Lane carefully pointed to the turns, the underpass the knoll, the book depository, the location of witnesses. He then struck. His first concrete demonstration—an affidavit flashed up on the screen in print still too small to see—John Kennedy was shot from the *front,* not from behind. Eyewitnesses—the Warren Commission had no interest in them—told of the gun going off on the grassy knoll. The eyewitness who "saw" Lee Harvey Oswald and gave his description could not possibly have seen a kneeling man and known how tall he was, etc.

I saw tears in many eyes around me. Why would anyone say a bullet came from behind and above when it didn't—unless . . . ? And how could anyone flash a description of Oswald whom he couldn't see—unless . . . ? A dead young President, shadows everywhere—the tears in the eyes were brimming. Lane followed quickly with his demonstration that the gun had first been reported as German, not Italian, and by an expert who held it in his hand long enough to describe its leather strap with absolute accuracy.

The villains multiplied. Now he had to bring himself in as a witness before the Warren Commission, and expose their refusal to listen to what it was he said about the rifle—not that its country of origin was stamped on it but that its trade name and bore were clear for the reading and expert evaluation. Next came the number of shots and Oswald's expert rating as a marksman: not three but at least four bullets have been found, Lane said, and nobody—not even the best marksman in all America—could get off *four* shots in less than fifteen seconds. Therefore, there must have been more than one shooter;

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therefore, even if Lee Harvey Oswald was one of the riflemen, there had to be at least another.

The screen flashed a cover of *Life*. Lee Harvey Oswald with the telescopic sights on the rifle which killed John F. Kennedy—a touched-up photo, Mark Lane said, pointing out details in the shadows on Oswald's face and on the ground which clearly proved *Life* had used a composite photograph. *The New York Times* was the next villain: it published the same touched-up photo—worse, it probably did a little dubbing on its own.

The audience was silent, sad, the girl on the ledge amoan with appreciation of Mark Lane's brilliance and integrity. He took a brief intermission.

Nobody left.

Outside, in the misting rain, people smoked, talked in low voices, wondering, arguing a little among themselves. Most of it they had heard before—at second or third hand. Some of what they heard was in the *Times* supplement on the Commission report, except that Lane now gave his side.

My law student neighbor hadn't left his seat when I returned.

"If there's a conspiracy, wouldn't Bobby Kennedy want it known? There is a kind of let's-sweep-it-under-the-rug side to the whole Commission set-up and report, don't you think? Can it be that the family knows they can't bring John Kennedy back to life, so why keep this thing going? He makes you think, that man Lane. I'll never feel right about this assassination, I guess."

The new villain of Lane's lecture was one he had hinted at before, Chief Justice Earl Warren, whom he characterized as a poor lawyer and, by extension, naturally, a less-than-competent Supreme Court Justice. Again I had an odd feeling I was communing with both ends of the political spectrum at one and the same moment. For wasn't this, in an odd way, just another version of the "Impeach Earl Warren" pitch, though Mark Lane was obviously too sophisticated to put it that way. Warren was the cover-up chief. Lane began working him over with little digs at his running down the stairs of the Book Depository and timing himself; but what he ended with was something far more insidious. That Earl Warren had wilfully blocked Mark Lane from producing *his* witnesses, *his* evidence, *his* facts, *the* truth.

On and on, till midnight, Lane carried on his demonstration. Some of it was valid, some debatable, some mere nonsense. But what emerged was that simplistic view of things which must have causes for all its effects; which must *blame* for all disasters; which cannot allow chance

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or accident or coincidence but that these are subjected to naive etiologies paralleled only by the villainies a Joseph McCarthy or a Robert Welch had to dream up *to account for* all loose ends, all unfinished tales, all antinomies and mired complexities.

I left as the question period began. I was among the few to leave then. Lane had concluded his performance by vowing never to give up his search, to continue to use the money he gathered, and the help he was offered, to keep his Committee working in Dallas until it finds out the truth about John F. Kennedy's assassination. "Nothing or anybody is going to stop me, ladies and gentlemen, I promise you that," Mark Lane said as he ended, and people rose to cheer and applaud, which they were still doing as I went out.

On the stage Lane didn't look like a martyr; he looked now less like a student, more like a businessman. And a good one at that. I wished such dedication well.

Jack Ludwig

ACCRA

Twenty minutes after John Kennedy was pronounced dead, an African diplomat in Accra reported the news to an American woman who had come by his house to borrow some flour. He had heard it on Radio Brazzaville. "Oh no," she said. "It's not possible." Forty minutes later I dropped in on her and her husband who were having dinner—by then it was after 8:00 P.M. in Ghana. When they told me, I said: "Oh no! You're kidding, aren't you?"

At about the same time a dapper young Ghanaian heard the news from an American girl he was visiting. "Such a pity," he said, "that they killed the wrong President!"

At about the same time Dr. Kwame Nkrumah was telephoning William Mahoney, the U.S. Ambassador, to express his horror. "Is there anything I can do?" Nkrumah asked.

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"Only pray," the Ambassador said.

"Mr. Mahoney, I am kneeling."

Six weeks later a man with a rifle fired five shots at the President of Ghana and missed.

The first Englishman I met when I arrived in Ghana in 1962 said that "if Stalin were running this country maybe he could organize the chaos into anarchy." The Government had just announced it was drawing up plans to have Ghanaians—in the interests of African unity—drive down the right side of the road, as in the former French colonies, instead of the left; expatriates were saying with due cause that the plan was to start off with a six-month period when the Government would legalize driving on either side. In 1963 the Government's compulsory savings scheme was dropped on the advice of a Ghanaian economist who claimed that the people didn't like anything that was compulsory; it was replaced by an income tax. Before Parliament unanimously passed the bill extending the period of confinement under the Preventive Detention Act from five years to ten, a good many MP's protested strenuously, arguing not that the P.D.A. was unjust or undemocratic, not that five years was quite enough time for a man to be held without trial, but that it was humiliating to be cooped up. A village tailor succeeded in beating a murder rap because he convinced the judge that his victim had called him silly. Finally, after the referendum in which Ghana was voted a one-party state, an MP from the United Party, which was banned a long time ago, told Parliament that Ghana was not a one-party state no matter how much the Government said it was.

Dr. Nkrumah's Convention People's Party proclaims that the country is Marxist-Leninist, or else Marxist-Nkrumaist. Recently when someone said in Parliament that Ghana was socialist, the parliamentarians had a good laugh; but perhaps soon they'll be glad their laughter wasn't recorded in the minutes.

In Ghana, this most prosperous country on the continent north of the Witwatersrand, something is shaking loose for which Europe and America have no descriptive literature. Maybe because white intellectuals have had their affairs, congenial or hostile, vicarious usually, with the Soviet Left, it hasn't yet been taken for granted that the world's new revolutionaries are apathetic to Russian Marxism. But just as we don't judge African art from our own culture's esthetics, we had better not judge African politics from our own culture's political experience. We must understand that to most Africans Mau Mau was as worthy a cause as Loyalist Spain, that the CIA is more menacing than the K.G.B., and

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that South Africa is more distasteful to a lorry driver in the West African bush than Cuba is to a United Fruit shareholder in Miami Beach.

Perhaps what is coming isn't tropical Marxist-Somebodyism, but a society closer to Mussolini's. Comparisons will be easy and will teach us nothing.

I do not know what Ghana will be in five years, or five months, but I have lived here during the period it became a police state—when a large number of civilian police officials were dismissed or arrested and their authority effectively assumed by the army. Although for some time now *Time, Newsweek,* and the British newspapers have had issues banned for carrying unfavorable pieces about the country or about Dr. Nkrumah, at this writing it appears that outside publications may be prohibited altogether. A taxi driver was sentenced to three years for shooting off his mouth about the President in front of some soldiers. Men have been arrested for having advised their friends to vote against the Government in the recent referendum. And Dr. J. B. Danquah, whom Dr. Nkrumah overwhelmed in the 1960 presidential elections, has been detained for the second time in three years.

Although Anglo-Saxon political practice has been as rare in Ghana as in most of the rest of the world, the police state is new. Its beginnings are in the attempt on the President's life in August, 1962, from which he escaped with eleven pieces of grenade shrapnel in his back. The rightist United Party, which had advocated a semi-tribal federal state rather than the existing unitary state before it was outlawed, was accused. Within two weeks, Tawia Adamafio, the Minister of Information, and two other Government personalities were arrested. (Suddenly the Soviet Ambassador, a man named Sidenko who had been extremely friendly with the Minister, returned to Moscow; and the U.S.S.R. Showroom shut down for a while.) More grenades were thrown in Accra, not at the President but at his supporters, and confidence in the Government and the Convention People's Party began deteriorating until January 13, 1963, when a coup d'etat by two dozen Togolese soldiers destroyed the United Party's base of operations in Lomé, Togo's capital 500 yards from the Ghanaian frontier. Somehow Ghana obtained from the new Togolese Government certain U.P. documents which had been seized the night of the coup, and within a week a terrorist was arrested in Accra who led the police to his colleagues.

Except for the police who continued to lounge at the blockades on the roads leading into the city and at the entrance to the airport, but who left the trains alone, Accra became its old self again. During this period when calm was restored the major event in Africa was the founding of a somewhat amorphous Organization of African Unity at Addis

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Ababa, but in Ghana it was the return from London of Otumfuo the Asantehene, Nana Sir Osei Agyemang Prempeh II, K.B.E., paramount chief of the Ashanti Confederacy, whose divine office had once attached to its rule the title "Osagyefo," which means something like "he who has redeemed his people from paying tribute to another people." (Kwame Nkrumah is now called Osagyefo the President.) The cocoa-rich Ashantis had never been altogether disciplined by the British during Gold Coast days, and when Nkrumah opened the road to independence the Ashantis organized the National Liberation Movement to restore their own tribal sovereignty outside Nkrumah's designs for a non-tribal nation, one and indivisible. In their capital, Kumasi, they used terrorism to obstruct the C.P.P., and when Parliament outlawed tribal politics, they united with smaller tribal and religious parties to form the United Party. Finally Otumfuo himself was exiled, in December, 1961, to London for "medical treatment."

No government of Ghana can long endure without at least token compliance from the Ashantis, and the President has been canny enough to neutralize them and even gain support among them with pork-barrel bribes, education, and intimidation. After an anti-Government strike in September, 1961, however, which started among the industrial workers in coastal Takoradi and followed the railroad workers to Kumasi in the interior, the Government, which had been astonished by it all, blamed the U.P. (not wholly without cause) and detained several prominent Ashanti oppositionists. Then the Government generously provided for the Asantehene's medical care.

The detainees were released in December, 1962, and at last in May, 1963, Otumfuo sailed to Ghana and spent a week in Accra. I was in Kumasi when he flew back to his people. The police platoons at Kumasi Aerodrome could scarcely manage to restrict the crowd in the welcoming area to holders of a special pink card issued for the arrival.

I'd gone with three Americans, Julius, a lecturer at Kwame Nkrumah University in Kumasi, his wife Barbara, and their weekend guest, Judy, a graduate student from Columbia University. As we left the airport, his blue Volkswagen diminished the pageantry of a traffic jam that looked like an assembly line at Mercedes-Benz. (In Kumasi, even the taxis are Mercedes-Benz.) Lining the road to the Asantehene's Palace were school children in the cowboy and cowgirl uniforms of the Ghana Young Pioneers, waving their toy Ghanaian flags, red, gold, and green, composed around a central black star. Everyone seemed to be giggling at the *abruni*, the white people, who, they must have thought, had accidentally caught themselves in this tedious African procession honking and creeping into the city.

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We continued under a banner saying *"Nana Akwaaba"* (Welcome to the Chief) which was stretched between two streetlamps on the edge of town. Julius compared the traffic to the approach to the Triborough Bridge at 5:30. I waved to some Young Pioneers who started shouting *"abruni"* at me and laughing. An elderly woman, half my height and twice my weight, evidently one of those few score market mammies who control the country's petty commerce, walked past the car leering at us, saying: *"Akwaaba, akwaaba."* Julius, who had been suggesting that we break out of the procession and take another route to the Palace, finally veered off at a round-about onto a side street by which, honking continuously, we reached the grounds of Mahyia Palace while the Asantehene's Mercedes, surrounded by screaming women of the royal family, dressed in white silk, was still half a block away.

Outside the inner compound of the Palace there were, at one time or another, about 5000 Ashantis, and the cameras Julius and Judy carried kept us from moving freely among them. As we approached a wide rectangular building where someone was beating the talking drums, an old man, authoritative-looking, with a younger man walking behind him holding a rainbow-colored umbrella over his head, stepped in front of us and raised his hand. Since we weren't Ashantis, we expected that this gesture meant we weren't *akwaaba,* but then several other dignified old men, obviously all of them experienced with white men, gathered around the first and, raising their chins at the proper angle, smiled with the folklore of Ashanti in their faces. Julius took a picture, and they accepted our thanks for their having posed; evidently they had no notion of ever seeing the developed prints, or else they presumed we were anthropologists and that next year they would be featured in one of the books on sale at the Government Catering Rest House.

The building we were heading for was a compound which was only an adjunct of the Mahyia compound. It was constructed like a garage, or, to account for its size, like a motor-pool for the U.S. Army, but there was only one car inside. Against a wall were piled four or five cobwebbed talking drums, some gong-gongs, and various others instruments of celebration. I spent ten minutes poking my head through windows looking for the remnants of Sir Charles Macarthy, a Governor of the Gold Coast in the early 1820's, out of whose skull other Asantehenes had drunk palm wine. I also hoped that in the fever of festivity they might make more accessible the Golden Stool of Ashanti, the traditional throne of the Asantehene, which at the end of the seventeenth century had come out of the sky into the arms of Okomfo Anokye, Otumfuo Nana Osei Tutu's fetish priest who was the Richelieu of the Ashanti Confederacy. But

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such items are not displayed lightly, and I suppose are kept in a secret room at the Ghana Cultural Center.

Two months later a grab-bag treason trial opened in Accra with five defendants: Tawia Adamafio; Ako Adjei, former Foreign Minister and an old chum of Dr. Nkrumah's from university days in Pennsylvania and London; the former executive-secretary of the C.P.P.; a rather hysterical former member of Parliament for the U.P.; and a curious civil servant who claimed to have been in the pay of innumerable intelligence outfits, including Ghana's.

One piece of evidence against Adamafio was that he had opposed the strike of September, 1961; another was that he had once borrowed two pounds from his girl friend. When Ako Adjei was accused of borrowing and not repaying £25,000 from the Ghana Commercial Bank in order to finance the plot, he claimed he had merely given the money to the spirit Zebus of the kingdom of Uranus and that Zebus had kept those five thousand £5 notes, plus an additional ten percent the Minister had offered him, instead of doubling the money as he had promised. (On this matter I have a theory based on the sheerest speculation: that unknown to the police, the money went not to Uranus, but to Angola, a destination which could never be declared openly.) The multiple-spy testified that Geoffrey Bing, the President's English legal advisor, had come to his cell and offered him a lessened sentence if he would implicate Adamafio, but he had refused.

The Chief Justice, Sir Arku Korsah, inquired if the defendant believed that Geoffrey Bing could influence the Court, and the defendant stated that Bing had said he would do so through the President.

"Did you believe Geoffrey Bing when he said that?"

"Yes," the defendant said, "because anything can happen in Ghana."

"Standing here in this court today, do you believe that?"

"Anyway I do."

He was sentenced to hang, as was the United Party man, but Adamafio, Adjei, and the other C.P.P. man were acquitted in a verdict handed down in December, 1963. That was the end of tranquillity.

The three judges had been U.P. men when the President appointed them to the Supreme Court to get them out of politics, and within three days of their unexpected decision the Chief Justice was forced out of the judiciary. "Enemies of the people"—notably the three judges, the other two of whom left the judiciary shortly after Sir Arku Korsah—were indicted daily by the three Government papers and by Radio Ghana. Parliament thereupon voted the President supreme powers over the judiciary, a move which was overlooked a day or so later when the

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President announced a Constitutional referendum for that purpose, among others. *The Evening News* in a giant front page box quoted Franklin D. Roosevelt on the dangers of a Supreme Court politically hostile to the elected government.

On January 2, 1964, a member of the Presidential guard fired five shots at Dr. Nkrumah and killed his security chief. The official version of what happened is that no others guards were in the vicinity and that the killer stalked Dr. Nkrumah around the compound at Flagstaff House until the President jumped from behind a door and subdued him. This isn't impossible. But one halfway plausible and nationwide rumor has it that the guard wanted to kill only his boss, the security chief, for not having approved his application for study in U.K. At the time of this writing the Government is preparing to prosecute a case which will name a recently arrested Police Commissioner as a key figure in an assassination plot which involves "a foreign power." (Another recently arrested police official was a prominent prosecution witness in the Adamafio trial.)

I don't know how strongly, but President Nkrumah definitely suspects the C.I.A. of wanting to kill him. Lloyd Garrison has written in *The New York Times* that Dr. Nkrumah has distributed among his colleagues 500 copies of Andrew Tully's *CIA—The Inside Story,* an account of the overthrows of Jacobo Arbenz, Mohammed Mossadegh, and Patrice Lumumba, of CIA machinations in Indo-China, of CIA involvement in the Generals' Plot against Charles de Gaulle, and of the failure of the CIA against Cuba. To the list of deposed or murdered political figures, the Ghanaian press adds Felix Moumie of Cameroun, Abdel Kassem, King Farouk, Ngo Dinh Diem, and Dag Hammarskjold.

The shooting didn't deter the voting. On January 5, a special Sunday edition of *The Evening News* declared "class war" in Ghana, and the referendum was designated the major battle of that war. *The Ghanaian Times* for January 24, in a front page editorial in boldface, warned that "those who think they can hide under the so-called 'secrecy' of the polling booth to fool us must know that the days when we could be fooled are gone. And those fence sitters who prefer to stay at home must likewise know that the people's wrath is apt to descend without mercy on those who are not with us." The second page of that issue, however, began an editorial by proclaiming in extra-large boldface: "When you stand in the polling booth today, and get ready to cast your vote, thank God that you live in a land where each citizen can freely express, without fear or favour, his political views, and the basic democratic right to vote in secret according to his conscience."

After the Government announced that over 98 percent of all

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registered voters had supported the Constitutional amendments—although the no boxes had been guarded by police and in any case most people stayed home—the C.P.P. organized two days of demonstrations at the U.S. Embassy. It was an orderly, well-disciplined affair. There was someone to grab the camera from the little man the Embassy always sends out to take pictures. There was the white man who was walking toward the Embassy when a demonstrator came up and shook a hostile sign in his face. "Oh, no, look, please, I've just arrived in the country. I haven't done anything," the American said. The Ghanaian put down his sign, stuck out his hand, and said: "Welcome to our country. How do you like this Ghana here?" It may have been accidental that someone started lowering the American flag; at least if it was intentional he didn't know very well how to go about it. The next day the Afro-American Foreign Service officer who had raised the flag back into place was attacked anonymously in *The Ghanaian Times* by another Afro-American who accused him of being an Uncle Tom for working for the U.S. Government. But, as they say, anything can happen in Ghana. What we remember now is the big sign which said: "You Killed Kennedy But You Can't Kill Kwame!" That sign probably expresses one of Dr. Nkrumah's strongest feelings.

Six expatriate lecturers at the University of Ghana, four of them Americans, were shortly thereafter deported for "subversion." Although I have reservations about the justice of deporting at least one of the Americans, it had been known for some time that the French West Indian who was ousted had worked with the French in Algeria; among expatriates he was believed to be an agent of the Deuxième Bureau. And certainly one of the Americans had long been rumored to be CIA. Whatever the reasons for the deportations, the Government had spent several months on their investigations and hadn't bothered even to warn any of the openly anti-Nkrumah expatriates at the University.

I myself had been outside Accra since Pete Seeger's concerts at the Ghana Drama Studio the first week in January. From all one could gather from Radio Ghana and the newspapers, a wave of terror was beginning, all Americans would be deported within a month, and Ghana was about to become a Soviet Socialist Republic. I wasn't even sure if the usually well-informed foreigners in Accra knew anything else, or were still there.

Independence Day, March 6, was a Friday, and on Thursday I took a Benz-bus into the capital. When we reached the roadblock on the outskirts of town a policeman picked up the pineapple that was on the seat next to the driver and asked: "Is this a bomb?" I kept my white face solemn as the driver, all the policemen, and all the other passengers

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laughed openly. "Pass on!" the officer said without further inspection.

At the lorry park on Boundary Road I found a taxi to take me where I would be staying. There was the usual man sitting next to the driver, and I supposed that he was the driver's "brother"—i.e., someone to talk with—because most Ghanaian taxi drivers don't like being alone —not because they fear robbery, it seems, but because they fear loneliness. However I noticed that sitting in the "brother's" lap were the credentials of a Criminal Investigation Division plainclothesman. I figured he was one of the secret agents who report on what people say in taxis. During the course of our long drive, he philosophized with me about the joys of riding around town doing nothing. Now and then he would stop talking and muse over that photograph of himself with the Ghana Police seal impressed in it. He was probably a man who had never done much or had much before, and now he wanted people to know he was doing an important job of which he was proud. Or maybe his orders were to dissuade people from spreading anti-Government rumors instead of to catch them at it.

The next Wednesday, March 11, was a memorable day for the Republic of Ghana: President Kwame Nkrumah announced before Parliament the completed draft for the Seven-Year Development Plan which had taken three years to draw up. Although most of his address was a somewhat detailed account of what the Government hoped to do and what progress could be expected, there were a few scattered moments when Nkrumah returned to his usual preoccupations with Parliament. For the Development Plan to be successful, he said, Ghana would need men who were incorruptible. (Shouts of "Hear! Hear!" and "What?" and general laughter.) The President warned that stern action would be taken against contractors who "offer, give (a low moan in the Parliament), or agree to give (shouts and laughter) gifts (cheers) to members of the Government" (shouts of "Hear! Hear" and "Yes!" and "No!" and general tumult). Nkrumah then thanked the British and American governments for their support in the Volta River Project (no stirring among the MP's) and "the American private sector in the shape of the Kaiser complex of industries" (wild applause). As he had done the previous September, the President noted that certain Ghanaians were draining capital from the country and in secret investing it abroad despite stringent laws against doing so. (Shouts of "Shame!") As he had done the previous September, he promised a three-month moratorium during which Ghanaians could bring their money back with no questions asked. (General laughter in the sensuous guttural tones of West Africa.) As he had done the previous September, he leaned forward, smiled at his boys, and said: "So bring it back!" It was Diogenes addressing the Mafia.

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Shortly after Dr. Nkrumah finished speaking, a mild earth tremor shook Accra. Then, with greater political benefits than he could have expected, he made an inspection tour of the city and, at least in front of Cocoa House, walked among the people for the first time since January 8, 1963, when a bomb exploded at Accra Stadium a few minutes after he had left. It is remarkable how his physical presence can still affect his people.

Ghanaians who a week earlier had told me they'd just as soon someone killed him, all at once spoke of him with awe. They hadn't seen him; but they'd heard stories that he was no longer surrounded by troops in Christiansborg Castle, he was among them—"Oh Osagyefo," one educated man told me, "they say he will never die. We know that is nonsense, don't we? But Osagyefo is in God's protection. It is true. And that means that this place Ghana is in God's protection."

Jason Thatcher

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VARIETY

BUT IS IT LEGAL?

In 1963, H. L. A. Hart, Oxford Professor of Jurisprudence, gave three lectures at Stanford University. In these lectures (now published as *Law, Liberty and Morality*[1]) Professor Hart attempted to answer the old question: is the fact that certain conduct is by common standards immoral sufficient cause to punish that conduct by law? A question which leads him to what might be a paradox: "Is it morally permissible to enforce morality as such? Ought immorality as such to be a crime?" Philosophically, Professor Hart inclines to John Stuart Mill's celebrated negative. In the essay "On Liberty," Mill wrote, "The only purpose for which power can rightfully be exercised over any member of a civilized community against his will is to prevent harm to others"; and to forestall the arguments of the paternally minded, Mill added that a man's "own good, either physical or moral, is not a sufficient warrant. He cannot rightfully be compelled to do or forbear because it will be better for him to do so, because it will make him happier, because in the opinions of others, to do so would be wise or even right." Now it would seem that at this late date in the Anglo-American society, the question of morality and its relation to the law has been pretty much decided. In general practice, if not in particular statute, our society tends to keep a proper distance between the two. Yet national crisis may, on occasion, bring out the worst in our citizenry. In 1917 while our boys were over there, a working majority of the Congress decided that drink was not only sinful for the moral man but bad for the physical man. The result was Prohibition. After a dozen years of living with the Great Experiment, the electorate finally realized that moral legislation on such a scale is impossible to enforce. A lesson was learned and one would have thought

1 Stanford University Press. $3.00.

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it unlikely that the forces which created the Volstead Act could ever again achieve a majority. But today odd things are happening in the Republic, as well as in the Kingdom across the water where Professor Hart detects a revival of what he calls "legal moralism," and he finds alarming certain recent developments.

In the days of the Star Chamber, to conspire to corrupt public morals was a common law offense. Needless to say, this vague catch-all turned out to be a marvelous instrument of tyranny and it was not entirely abandoned in England until the eighteenth century. Now it has been suddenly revived as a result of the 1961 case "Shaw *vs.* Director of Public Prosecutions." Shaw was an enterprising pimp who published a magazine called "Ladies Directory," which was just that. Despite this useful contribution to the gallantry of England, Shaw was found guilty of three offenses. Publishing an obscene article. Living on the earnings of prostitutes. Conspiring to corrupt public morals. The last offense delighted the legal moralists. There was much satisfied echoing of the eighteenth-century Lord Mansfield's statement, "Whatever is *contra bonos mores et decorum* the principles of our laws prohibit and the King's Court as the general censor and guardian of the public morals is bound to restrain and punish." As a result of the decision against Mr. Shaw, it is now possible to ban a book like *Lady Chatterley's Lover* on the imprecise grounds that it will corrupt public morals, and a lecture by Mr. Norman O. Brown could end in arrest. The possibilities for persecution in the name of public morals (themselves ill-defined) are endless and alarming. Though various American states still retain "conspiring to corrupt" statutes, they are largely cherished as relics of our legal origins in the theocratic code of Oliver Cromwell. The last serious invoking of this principle occurred in 1935 when the Nazis solemnly determined that anything was punishable if it was deserving of punishment according "to the fundamental conceptions of penal law and sound popular feeling."

Defining immorality is of course not an easy task, though English judges and American state legislatures seem not to mind taking it on. Lord Devlin, a leader of the legal moralists, has said "that the function of the criminal law is to enforce a moral principle and nothing else." How does Lord Devlin arrive at a moral principle? He appeals to the past. What is generally said to be wrong is wrong, while "a recognized morality is as necessary to society's existence as a recognized government." Good. But Lord Devlin does not acknowledge that there is always a considerable gap between what is officially recognized as good

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behavior and what is in actual fact countenanced and practiced. Though adultery in England is thought to be morally wrong, there are no statutes under which a man may be punished for sleeping with someone else's wife. Adultery is not a legal offense, nor does it presumably arouse in the public "intolerance, indignation, and disgust," the three emotions which Lord Devlin insists are inevitably evoked by those acts which offend the accepted morality. Whenever this triad is present, the law must punish. Yet how is one to measure "intolerance, indignation, and disgust"? Without an appeal to Dr. Gallup, it would be difficult to decide what, if anything, the general public really thinks about these matters. Without a referendum, it is anyone's guess to what degree promiscuity, say, arouses disgust in the public. Of course Lord Devlin is not really arguing for this sort of democracy. His sense of right and wrong is based on what he was brought up to believe was right and wrong, as prescribed by church and custom.

In the realm of sexual morals, all things take on a twilight shade. Off and on for centuries, homosexuality has aroused the triple demon in the eyes of many. But a majority? It would be surprising if it did, knowing what we now know about the extent—if not the quality—of human sexual behavior. In any case, why should homosexual acts between consenting adults be considered inimical to the public good? This sort of question raises much heat, and the invoking of "history." According to Lord Devlin, "the loosening of moral bonds is often the first stage of (national) disintegration." Is it? The periods in history which are most admired by legal moralists tend to be those vigorous warlike times when a nation is pursuing a successful and predatory course of military expansion, such as the adventures of Sparta, Alexander, Julius Caesar, Frederick of Prussia. Yet a reading of history ought to convince Lord Devlin that these militaristic societies were not only brutish and "immoral" by any standard but startlingly homosexual. What was morally desirable in a Spartan army officer is now punished in Leicester Square. Obviously public attitudes have changed since those vigorous days. Does that then mean that laws should alter as old prejudices are replaced by new? In response to public opinion, the Emperor Justinian made homosexuality a criminal offense on the grounds that buggery, as everyone knew, was the chief cause of earthquakes.

With the decline of Christianity in the last two centuries, the legal moralists have more and more used the state to punish sin. One of Lord Devlin's allies, J. G. Stephen, in "Liberty, Equality, Fraternity," comes straight to the point. Referring to moral offenders, he writes,

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"The feeling of hatred and the desire of vengeance are important elements in human nature which ought, in such cases, to be satisfied in a regular public and legal manner." There is the case not only for capital punishment, but for public hangings all in the name of the Old Testament God of vengeance. Or as Lord Goddard puts it, "I do not see how it can be either non-Christian, or other than praiseworthy, that the country should be willing to avenge crime." Yet Stephen also realizes that for practical purposes "you cannot punish anything which public opinion as expressed in the common practice of society does not strenuously and unequivocally condemn. To be able to punish, a moral majority must be overwhelming." But is there such a thing as a moral majority in sexual matters? Professor Hart thinks not. "The fact that there is lip service to an official sexual morality should not lead us to neglect the possibility that in sexual, as other matters, there may be a number of mutually tolerant moralities, and that even where there is some homogeneity of practice and belief, offenders may be viewed not with hatred or resentment, but with amused contempt or pity."

In the United States the laws determining correct human behavior are the work of the state legislatures. Over the years these solemn assemblies have managed to make a complete hash out of it, pleasing no one. The present tangled codes go back to the founding of the country. When the Cromwells fell, the disgruntled Puritans left England for Holland. To put it baldly, they departed not because they were persecuted for their religious beliefs but because they were forbidden to persecute others for *their* beliefs. Holland took them in, and promptly turned them out. Only North America was left. Here, as lords of the wilderness, they were free to create the sort of quasi-theocratic society they had dreamed of. Rigorously persecuting one another for religious heresies, witchcraft, sexual misbehavior, they formed that ugly polity whose descendants we are. As religious fundamentalists, they were irresistibly drawn to the Old Testament God at his most forbidding and cruel, while the sternness of St. Paul seemed to them far more agreeable than the occasional charity of Jesus. Since adultery was forbidden by the Seventh Commandment and fornication was condemned in two of St. Paul's memos, the Puritans made adultery and fornication criminal offenses even though no such laws existed in England, before or after Cromwell's reign. As new American states were formed, they modeled their codes on those of the original states. To this day, 43 states will punish a single act of adulterous intercourse, while 21 states will punish fornication between unmarried people. In

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no other western country is fornication a criminal offense. As for adultery, England, Japan and the Soviet Union have no such statutes; France and Italy will punish adultery under special conditions (e.g., if the man should establish the mistress in the family home); Germany and Switzerland punish adultery only if a court can prove that a marriage has been dissolved because of it.

In actual practice, the state laws are seldom invoked, although 242 Bostonians were arrested for adultery as recently as 1948. These statutes are considered "dead-letter laws" and there are those who argue that since they are so seldom invoked, why repeal them? One answer came in 1917 when a number of racketeers were arrested by the Federal government because they had taken girl friends to Florida, violating the Mann Act as well as the local fornication-adultery statutes. This case (Caminetti *vs.* U.S.) set a dangerous precedent. Under a busy Attorney General, the "dead-letter laws" could be used to destroy all sorts of opponents, villainous or otherwise.

Rape is another offense much confused by state laws. During the thirties, out of 2366 New York City indictments, only 18 percent were for forcible rape. The remaining 82 percent were for statutory rape, a peculiar and imprecise crime. For instance, in Colorado it is statutory rape if intercourse takes place between an unmarried girl under eighteen and a man over eighteen. In practice this means that a boy of nineteen who has an affair with a consenting girl of seventeen is guilty of statutory rape. All the girl needs to do is to accuse her lover of consensual relations and he can be imprisoned for as long as fifty years. There are thousands of "rapists" serving time because, for one reason or another, they were found guilty of sexual intercourse with a willing partner.

In nearly every state fellatio, cunnilingus and anal intercourse are punished. Not only are these acts forbidden between men, they are forbidden between men and women, even within wedlock. As usual, the various state laws are in wild disarray. Ohio, the mother of Presidents, deplores fellatio but tolerates cunnilingus. In another state, sodomy is punished with a maximum 20-year sentence, while fellatio calls for only three years, a curious discrimination. Deviate sexual acts between consenting adults are punished in most states, sentences running from three years to life imprisonment. Of the other countries of the west, only England and Germany enter this area at all.

Elsewhere in the field of moral legislation, 27 states forbid sexual relations and/or marriage between the white race and its inferiors: Negroes, American Indians, Orientals; and our narcotic laws are the

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scandal of the west. With the passage in 1914 of the Harrison Act, addiction to narcotics was found to be not the result of illness or bad luck, but of sin and sin must of course be punished by the state. For half a century the Federal government has had a splendid time playing cops and robbers. And since you cannot have cops without robbers, they have created the robbers by maintaining that the sinful taking of drugs must be wiped out by law. As a result, the government's severity boosts the price of drugs, makes the game more desperate for addicts as well as pushers, encourages crime which in turn increases the payroll of the Narcotics Bureau. This lunatic state of affairs could exist only in a society still obsessed by the idea that the punishing of sin is the responsibility of the state. Yet in those countries where dope addiction is regarded as a matter for the doctor not the police, there can be no criminal traffic in drugs. In England there are 550 drug addicts. In New York City there are 23,000 addicts.

Theoretically the American separation of church and state should have left the individual's private life to his conscience. But this was not to be the case. The states promptly took it upon themselves to regulate the private lives of the citizens, flouting, many lawyers believe, the spirit if not the letter of the Constitution. The result of this experiment is all around us. One in eight Americans is mentally disturbed, and everywhere psychiatry flourishes. Our per capita acts of violence are beyond anything known to the other countries of the west, making our city streets unsafe for Peggy Goldwater and Mamie Eisenhower to walk. Clearly the unique attempt to make private morality answerable to law has not been a success. What to do?

On April 25, 1955, a committee of The American Law Institute presented a Model Penal Code (tentative draft number 4) to the Institute which was founded some 40 years ago "to promote the clarification and simplification of the law and its better adaptation to social needs." This Code represented an attempt to make sense out of conflicting laws, to remove "dead-letter laws" which might, under pressure, be reactivated or used for sinister ends, and to recognize that there is an area of private sexual morality which is no concern of the state. In this the Code echoed the recommendation of the Wolfenden Report which said: "Unless a deliberate attempt is to be made by society, acting through the agency of the law, to equate the sphere of crime with that of sin, there must remain a realm of private morality and immorality which is, in brief and crude terms, not the law's business."

The drafters of the Code proposed that adultery and sodomy be-

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tween consenting adults be removed from the sphere of the law on the grounds that "the Code does not attempt to use the power of the state to enforce purely moral or religious standards. We deem it inappropriate for the government to attempt to control behavior that has no substantial significance except as to the morality of the actor. Such matters are best left to religious, educational and other influences." The Committee's recommendaion on adultery was accepted. But there was a difference of opinion about sodomy. Judge John J. Parker spoke for the legal moralists: "There are many things that are denounced by the criminal civil code in order that society may know that the state disapproves. When we fly in the face of public opinion, as evidenced by the code of every state in this union, we are not proposing a code which will commend itself to the thoughtful. . . ." Judge Parker was answered by Judge Learned Hand who said, "Criminal law which is not enforced practically is much worse than if it was not on the books at all. I think homosexuality is a matter of morals, a matter very largely of taste, and it is not a matter that people should be put in prison about." Judge Hand's position was upheld by the Institute.

As matters now stand only the state of Illinois has attempted to modify its sex laws. As of 1962, there is no longer any penalty in Illinois for the committing of a deviate sexual act. On the other hand an "open and notorious" adulterer can still be punished with a year in prison and fornication can be punished with six months in prison. So it is still taken for granted that the state has the right to regulate private behavior, in the interest of public morality.

One of the odd post-war phenomena has been the slowness of the liberal community to respond to those flaws in our society which might be corrected by concerted action. It is, of course, exhilarating to determine to what degree Hannah Arendt was responsible for Hitler. Yet it would seem to me that a change in the legal codes of the fifty American states might be almost as interesting an occupation for the liberally inclined as the fixing of past guilt and the analysis of old crimes. As they stand, the laws affect nearly everyone; implemented, they affect millions. Originally, the United States made a brave distinction between church and state. But then we put within the legal provenance of the states that which rightfully was religion's concern, and for those not susceptible to religious discipline, the concern of the moral conscience of the individual. The result has caused much suffering. The state laws are executed capriciously and though in time they may wither away, without some organized effort, they could continue for generations. In fact, there are signs today that the legal

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conservatives are at work strengthening these laws. In Florida the administration has distributed an astonishing pamphlet denouncing homosexuals in terms of seventeenth-century grandeur. In Dallas a stripper named Candy Barr was given an unprecedented 15-year prison term, ostensibly because she was found with marijuana in her possession, but actually because she was a sinful woman. In the words of a Dallas lawyer, the jury was "showing the world they were in favor of God, heaven, and sending to hell-fire a girl who violated their sense of morality."[2]

In this lowering Goldwater time, there is a strong movement afoot to save society from sexual permissiveness. Guardians of the old-time virtue would maintain what they believe to be the status quo. They speak of "common decency" and "accepted opinion." But do such things really exist? And if they do, are they "right"? After all, there is no position so absurd that you cannot get a great many people to assume it. Lord Maugham, a former Lord Chancellor (where do they find them?), was convinced that the decline of the Roman Empire was the result of too frequent bathing. Justinian *knew* there was a causal link between buggery and earthquakes, while our great grandparents, as Steven Marcus recently reminded us, believed that masturbation caused insanity. I suspect that our own faith in psychiatry will seem as touchingly quaint to the future as our grandparents' belief in phrenology seems now to us. At any given moment, public opinion is a chaos of superstition, misinformation and prejudice. Even if one could accurately interpret it, would that be a reason for basing the law upon a consensus? Neither Professor Hart nor the legal moralists go that far. The conservatives are very much aware that they are living in an age of "moral decline." They wish to return to a stern morality like that of Cato or of Calvin. Failing that, they will settle for maintaining existing laws, the harsher the better. Professor Hart, on the other hand, believes that between what the law says people ought to do in their private lives and what they in fact do, there is a considerable division. To the degree that such laws ought, ideally, to conform with human practice, he is a democrat. In answering those who feel that despite what people actually do, they ought not to do it, he remarks that this may be true, yet "the use of legal punishment to freeze into immobility the morality dominant at a particular time in a society's existence may possibly succeed, but even where it does it contributes nothing to the survival of the animating spirit and formal values of social morality and may do much harm to them."

2 *Dallas, Public and Private.* By Warren Leslie. Grossman Publishers. $4.50.

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There is some evidence that by fits and starts the United States is achieving a civilization. Our record so far has not been distinguished, no doubt because we had a bad beginning. Yet it is always possible to make things better—as well as worse. Various groups are now at work trying to make sense of the fifty state codes. New York and California are expected to have improved codes by the end of this decade. But should there be a sudden renewal of legal moralism, attempts to modify and liberalize will fail. What is needed, specifically, is a test case before the Supreme Court which would establish in a single decision that "sin," where it does not disturb the public order, is not the concern of the state. This conception is implicit in our Constitution. But since it has never been tested, our laws continue to punish the sinful as though the state were still an arm of Church Militant. Although a Great Society is more easily attained in rhetoric than in fact, a good first step might be the removal from our statute books of that entirely misplaced scarlet letter.

Gore Vidal

TEXT AND THE COLLEGE STUDENT

Twenty-five years ago the teaching of literature in America was virtually revolutionized by a single textbook: *Understanding Poetry* by Cleanth Brooks and Robert Penn Warren. Brooks and Warren, as the book came to be called, was an adaptation for students of the criticism of Graves, Richards, Empson, and Ransom, a codification and demonstration of the so-called New Criticism. The resistance was loud, often vulgar, seldom articulate, both in the academy and in its journals, and no English department was without its split between New Critics and an Old Guard of "scholars" and "historians." Merely to take sides was to earn a title—of "critic" without writing any criticism, of "scholar"

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without doing any research—and no one need wonder therefore at the unwonted dialectical vigor displayed by otherwise placid teachers of literature. But any candidate will win against no candidate, and there was no substantial alternative to *Understanding Poetry*. Despite oppositions, the book, and imitations of it, came to dominate the teaching of introductory courses in literature both in colleges and, increasingly, in secondary schools.

Brooks and Warren offers, then, an extraordinary example, as does Samuelson's book in economics, of the potential influence of a textbook. There have even been accusations that *Understanding Poetry* and the New Critical bias it expresses has had a dire political effect on a whole generation of educated people. Thus, it might be charged, the Southern Agrarianism of Brooks and Warren (the persons, not the book) and of their colleagues, Ransom and Tate, can be located in their praise of the "organic wholeness" and self-sufficiency of a poem. What *really* is being praised, of course, are those organic (i.e. Southern) communities whose enriching interconnections are threatened by intrusions from the outside, as from the Constitution of these not-so-United States. I am inventing, rather than quoting an argument, but the general proposition is familiar enough: close reading of the text "by itself" is somehow related to the conservatism which distinguishes literate people since the Second World War from those liberal people of the thirties and early forties.

The kind of text which is fast replacing Brooks and Warren in the class room is represented, with a badness that cries for attention, by a recent promotion from Random House: *Bear, Man, and God: Seven Approaches to William Faulkner's The Bear,* edited by Frances Lee Utley, Lynn Z. Bloom, and Arthur F. Finney. This particular book will have nothing like the influence, academic or otherwise, of *Understanding Poetry*. And if it has any political implications they can only be of the cautionary kind, warning the citizen that he dare not form an opinion about anything unless he knows all the background and the opinions of all the experts. The book includes Faulkner's short novel *The Bear* and surrounds it with materials apparently essential for the reader: essays written over the years by a number of critics, bits and pieces of fiction, biography, and of historical and anthropological studies. The book is a lurid example of one of the ventures meant to dislodge the New Criticism, as represented by *Understanding Poetry,* from its preeminence.

The nature of this particular counter-movement is given some official sanction in a recent publication distributed by the Modern

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Language Association for the guidance of literary scholars: *The Aims and Methods of Scholarship in Modern Languages and Literatures.* In the essay on literary criticism, there is the contention, for example, that "it is out of the expansion of knowledge brought by the academic critics that the importance of Eliot and Joyce has been established, not through any contest of pro and con value judgments." Not everyone will be impressed with this formulation or with the arguments that attend it. Wasn't the decision to expand knowledge about Eliot and Joyce made on the basis of some prior value judgments as to their importance? How does anyone even determine the relevance of an item of knowledge to the works of Eliot or Joyce—or Faulkner—if not by value judgments, judgments, let us say, about the comparative weight of one passage as against another? Given the auspices under which it is made, the statement might be taken as an academic endorsement of "Casebooks" published by Crowell, "Twentieth Century Views" by Prentice-Hall, "Reader's Guides" by Noonday, "Contextual Editions" by Harcourt Brace, "Discussions of Literature" by Heath, "Critical Editions" by Norton, and, finally, "Seven Approaches" by Random House—all designed, as one advertisement put it, "to widen the perspective."

Now of course no one will oppose a widened perspective or an expansion of knowledge or reject the convenience of having at hand in any of these books essays that have often been neatly razored by some eager young scholar from the library's copy of *Modern Language Notes*—assuming the library even has a copy. I have learned to be suspicious, however, of what actually happens to the student and the teacher seized with an ambition to "widen the perspective." The metaphor of "widening" should itself be a warning, no less than the metaphor of "approaches," that what is proposed is a dispersal rather than a sharpening of critical attention. The New Critics wanted only to be left alone with the text, without even music or painting to distract them; they wanted to confront it, to penetrate it, to find, as one of the best of them once put it, "the best way in." Now one is to be "guided"; the object of attention has become a "case" which we are allowed only to "view" or to "approach"—seven different ways: biographically, canonically, culturally, developmentally, interpretively, stylistically. And, finally, there is the "background approach," but this takes us no further into *The Bear* than do any of the others.

Presumably, the final section of this book, entitled "Questions for Discussion and Writing," indicates the quality of critical thinking that results from seven approaches. Consider, then, the discussion that might ensue from the following: "In the Nobel Prize address and in *The Bear*

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(for example, in the phrase 'the heart's driving complexity'), Faulkner emphasizes the heart over all other parts of life. How does this affect writing, particularly Faulkner's? Does he neglect reason and intellect? Is he endangered by sentimentality?" It cannot be said here or elsewhere that the editors are endangered by English grammar, unless, of course, they really do want to suggest that "sentimentality" has an existence not very different from that of a virus. The question reveals the kind of thinking about literature and literary history implicit in the emphasis on "approaches" and "backgrounds"—the simpleminded notion of causation and of the possible connections between things that actually can be attributed to a writer (such as Faulkner's remarks about the "heart") and certain puzzles, like the sources of a writer's style. What if it could be shown that he worked on the story only on rainy mornings and that he used a borrowed and recalcitrant typewriter with eccentric punctuation? Questions about a writer's working habits may be vulgar, but they are at least not as silly as questions about the "heart." This is especially true when the students are not even asked what Faulkner means by the "heart." (Is "heart" here the same "heart" that in another writer is said to be in the Highlands?)

Of course the students imagined in such a book as this have a perspective so wide that they need not bother with simple or picky questions. They can answer questions which I cannot even understand: "In what ways does Faulkner use nature in *The Bear?* With what effects?" "Nature" apparently exists in the same way "sentimentality" does, not as something produced by the language of the writer and therefore different from "nature" in some other writer, but as an object "out there," acting upon him or to be used by him. Maybe the New Critics were wrong in claiming that a literary work is self-explanatory, but theirs was an invigorating mistake of emphasis compared to the mind-mushing assumption that terms like "nature" and "sentimentality" are self-explanatory. Or take the term "audience," so essential to people who like to talk about "background." "What concepts of audience might Faulkner have held," the editors ask, "in writing *Lion* and the *Saturday Evening Post* version of *The Bear?* How do they affect his writing?" This question is unanswerable, even assuming that the student had successfully met a question which he *could* have answered, but which isn't asked here, about the writing itself, what it sounds like, what it looks like. Do we know that in writing *The Bear* Faulkner ever actually thought of the *Saturday Evening Post?* And if he did think of it, how do we know what he thought of it? The question asked by the editors calls for nothing but the most presumptuous banalities about every item—

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audience, magazine, story, author—it touches. The fact that such questions often pose nonexistent issues does not prevent them from conditioning the idea of literary study evident here and in similar ventures. And to come on some of the other questions in the book ("How does Wertenbaker's concept of time in Faulkner agree or disagree with Hoffman's explanation?") is to be reminded of the extent to which literary study really does manufacture many of the issues which it dignifies by the name of scholarly inquiry.

If the students are not asked to be in close touch with anything except abstractions and concepts, if they are always two or three removes from the story, looking at it through this critic or that source, they might at least expect to be helped by the editors. Instead, they are given some short introductory comments that are both uninformative and illiterate. Can it be supposed that the students who pay $2.95 for this book are going to learn to write *better* than the people who edited it? Some of the grammar on merely four pages (115-118) isn't fit for the eyes of teenagers—"First, his viewpoint of man . . ."; "He gives the county a history—from its founding by Indians to its present threat by a machine-ridden economy."; "Like America in miniature, he makes . . ."; "He finds that his own ideas cannot be fit into one novel."; "One cannot just thumb through his works."; "Even lacking dates, it is useful . . ."; "For instance, hunting bears has for centuries been a vital function of societies in America, whether or not Faulkner studied them in detail." And so it goes, or staggers. Some of the critical essays reprinted here from books and learned periodicals are not much better. The following barbarisms are taken at random, each from a different essay: "Faulkner is an agrarian realist, but with profundity and depth, rising above Erskine Caldwell" (reprinted from *American Quarterly*); "But often the aura of something-moreness casts its spell upon the reader" (reprinted from *American Literature*); "Faulkner's imagery . . . is fairly well limited to the following uses, which may be summarized thus: (1) for developing tone through ironical contrasts, and atmosphere through a pathetic fallacy coloring of the natural background . . ." (reprinted from a book on Faulkner published by University of Oklahoma Press).

That illiteracies and critical vacuities characterize both the editorial comments and the essays of some of the contributors might suggest that the faults are nurtured by the very kind of critical and scholarly mentality being recommended to the young people who use this book. However free from such evident faults other similar texts might be, the academic practices exemplified by *Bear, Man, and God* can only pro-

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mote among students an incapacity to read literature and to talk intelligently about it. And what they do badly as students they will do worse in the hardening of maturity. Such a baleful conclusion is not extravagant when measured against the fact that this book represents the combined efforts of three teachers from reputable institutions (Ohio State University, Western Reserve University, Yale University are listed on the cover) and that it has already been accepted for use by a number of colleges and universities where one can only hope that it was not actually read by the teachers who are asking their classes to study it.

Richard Poirier

BALLIETT'S BAILIWICK

Since 1957 Whitney Balliett's *New Yorker* columns on jazz—84 of which are collected here,* along with three early pieces for other magazines—have been blooming quietly among the strange and unsteady opinions of Winthrop Sargeant, Anthony West, and the magazine's other regulars. But I became aware only very gradually of how extraordinary Balliett's writing is, since it has enough irritating *New Yorker* mannerisms to make it look quite unpromising at first glance. Like the people interviewed in "The Talk of the Town," the musicians Balliett interviews are always nonstop talkers who are rather coolly watched as they run on enthusiastically about something-or-other: "he replied, hunching forward excitedly, . . . he said, working up a new head of steam," and so on. And in talking about jazz itself Balliett persists in affecting the elaborate periphrases and the air of fastidious expertise that were probably borrowed from sports writers, but are an important part of what *The New Yorker* thinks of as urbanity. Thus a musician is often a "performer" ("Memphis Slim, a forty-five-year-old

* *The Sound of Surprise.* By Whitney Balliett. E. P. Dutton. $1.95. *Dinosaurs in the Morning.* By Whitney Balliett. J. B. Lippincott. $3.95.

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performer") who has "colleagues" ("Bailey, however, is unremittingly dull, a habit that is enthusiastically shared by most of his colleagues on the instrument"), and one of his better records is likely to be "one of his superior efforts." Worst of all, Balliett's columns are full of the carefully cadenced, studiedly sophisticated lyricism that has helped to make the *New Yorker* short story a recognizable genre. He writes, for example, that a famous tenor saxophonist's "heavy vibrato suggested the wingbeats of a big bird and his tone halls hung with dark velvet and lit by huge fires."

But anyone who does not look beyond these mannerisms is, in Balliett's case, making a mistake. Again take the sentence just quoted as an example. Out of context you see only that it is absurdly fancy and cluttered, but look at it in context:

> Hawkins' early style was rough and aggressive. His tone tended to be harsh and bamboolike, and he used a great many staccato, slap-tongued notes. But these mannerisms eventually vanished, and by the mid-thirties he had entered his second and most famous phase. His heavy vibrato suggested the wingbeats of a big bird and his tone halls hung with dark velvet and lit by huge fires. His technique had become infallible. He never fluffed a note, his tone never shrank or overflowed—as did Chu Berry's, say—and he gave the impression that he had enough equipment to state in half a dozen different and finished ways what was in his head.

The sentence is still fancy, but if you happen to know how Coleman Hawkins sounded in the twenties and then in the thirties—and, incidentally, how Chu Berry sounded imitating him—what you are struck by is not its fanciness but the astonishing descriptive accuracy that it shares with the more matter-of-fact sentences around it. Fancy writing or not, during those years Hawkins really did sound just the way Balliett says he did, and to be able to offer so perfect a verbal image of his or anyone else's playing is to have a very rare gift. This sort of accuracy can be found in almost every column in these collections, and it is something to be grateful for at a time when most criticism—even in better magazines than *The New Yorker*—is relentlessly pretentious and self-regarding. Balliett may have his faults, but at least he is always more interested in describing what he hears, and in getting his readers to hear it too, than he is in exploiting his subject matter or inflating his own opinions to provide revelations about the cultural situation and the plight of modern man.

But though Balliett's writing is not self-regarding, it is self-indulgent. Accurate description is necessary in all criticism so that the reader can listen to or look at or read what the critic has written about,

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and then compare what he hears or sees or finds on the page with what the critic has said was there. And it is particularly heartening to find someone writing accurately about jazz because all the writers who have written regularly about it in the past have either lacked Balliett's taste or his writing ability, or they have been too nervous about what tone to take toward the music—whether to play the barroom good fellow or the classroom pedant—to keep the eye steadily on the object. As I've suggested, Balliett's great virtue is that he can keep his eye on the object and describe it accurately, but his trouble is that he is too exclusively interested in doing so. He is too intent on making each column start fresh and end as a finished, self-sufficient production; there is too little intellectual continuity from column to column, too little sense of a mind actively working to articulate what F. R. Leavis once called "an organization of . . . things that have found their bearings with regard to one another." When he has something before him to be described, all his energy goes into describing it; when he doesn't, he is likely to fall into long and meaningless digressions, in which the fancy writing that worked in the Coleman Hawkins paragraph because it was being turned outward on a real object is turned inward on nothing at all. He is fond of beginning his columns with such digressions, of which the following is a fair sample:

> If heaven does induce the final cooling of those fleshy turbines the emotions, then all great religious music, which is distinctly fleshy and highly emotional, is basically secular. (Most Protestant hymns, with their Babbitt-like rhythms and oaken melodies, *are* religious.) Indeed, some religious music shines with evil. Consider the ominous chants and down-there brass choirs in Berlioz' *Requiem,* which reverberate through the vaults not of heaven but of hell. And consider one of the newest of religious musics, the American Negro's gospel songs.

This sort of journalistic slackness is obviously related to the annoying mannerisms I mentioned at first, but it is a far more damaging flaw. Before you have had the desire or the chance to check the accuracy of a critic's descriptions and judgments, what makes him seem initially worth listening to and arguing with is precisely some sense of intellectual continuity and coherence—not the specious coherence critics often gain by forcing their personalities or their theories on everything they write about, but the genuine coherence which a trained sensibility possesses and by which it evaluates new experiences accurately in terms of old. Balliett does not really give you this sense, and so I suspect that many intelligent readers who don't already know enough about jazz to see the accuracy of his perceptions—just the readers, that is, who would

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stand to gain most from his writing—dismiss him as "just another *New Yorker* writer," and are not tempted to hear the records and musicians he writes about.

Often what he says about a musician in one column will clash bewilderingly with what he has said somewhere else. He can, for example, group Stan Getz with the tenor saxophonists who "thinned out [Lester Young's] seemingly bland aspects . . . into a colorless drawl," and later write that, in contrast to the "dozens of first-rate Negro musicians," there have been, "give or take a Gerry Mulligan or Stan Getz, only five comparable white musicians: Bix Beiderbecke, Dave Tough, Pee Wee Russell, Jack Teagarden, and Django Rheinhardt." But you cannot both have a style that can be fairly described as "a colorless drawl," and also be in a league with these five; therefore we are left with no hint of why Balliett thinks so highly of Getz. No doubt we'll find out if Balliett ever decides to devote a column to Getz, but we shouldn't have to wait until then.

More frequent and more revealing than such head-on collisions are subtler distortions and omissions. Balliett thinks that Louis Armstrong "has never been a comfortable ensemble player" or "an energetic improviser," and speaks of his playing before 1930 as being "marked by a brassy tone and a tendency to fluff one out of every five notes." But in another column on the trumpet-player Joe Thomas, he finds Thomas' style "consummate" and his tone "no less marvelous" than Beiderbecke's. To be sure, he has admitted that by 1930 Armstrong had become "the first of the great primitive jazz soloists"; but in view of his other comments, "primitive" becomes a suspect word and makes "great" faintly patronizing. So if you take the two columns together, the Armstrong of the best Hot Five and Hot Seven records—who, by the way, was an extremely energetic improviser and a very comfortable ensemble player, and who fluffed occasionally but not one out of five—comes out as a sort of jazz Grandma Moses, quite inferior to Joe Thomas. But while Thomas is, as Balliett says, an excellent and underrated musician, he should not even be mentioned in the same breath with the Armstrong of the twenties, let alone be implicitly rated above him. Similarly, Balliett compares Johnny Hodges and Charlie Parker:

> Hodges' blues solos are child's play in comparison with Parker's. But they are also classic balancings of tone, dynamics, rhythm, and choice of notes. There is no extraneous matter, and no thinness. There is no opacity. It is *mot-juste* improvising, and because of its basic understatement it illuminates completely the elegance and purity of the blues.

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Characteristically, this is an excellent description of Hodges' blues playing; but the comparison with Parker is very misleading in its implications. Balliett doesn't actually say that Parker's blues choruses lack the "classic" virtues of Hodges' and are, by contrast, thin, opaque and full of extraneous matter rather than *mots justes*. But without further clarification, that's the conclusion the reader draws, and he goes away thinking—quite wrongly, to my mind—that only an ear not attuned to "classic balancings" but satisfied with mere technical fireworks would prefer Parker to Hodges.

There are many more such distortions, and they seem to fit into a pattern. It is not simply that Balliett thinks his readers will already know about Armstrong and Parker, and will need rather to be told about the virtues of unfamiliar musicians like Thomas and Hodges—for he is not at all grudging in his praise of Bix Beiderbecke, Fats Waller, Duke Ellington and Billie Holiday, all of whom are now probably as familiar as Armstrong and Parker. I think the reason for much of Balliett's lack of critical balance lies in his sense that his readers will probably be more familiar with New Orleans—Dixieland jazz and bebop—as represented respectively to many people by early Armstrong and Parker—than with the kind of jazz he himself has most affection for and is most anxious to acquaint them with, the small- and big-band swing of the thirties—as represented not only by Thomas and Hodges but also by Waller, Ellington, Holiday and, for Balliett, in a way by Beiderbecke as well: "Some Beiderbecke aficionados hold that the ideal Beiderbecke record date would have included the likes of Frank Teschmacher, Eddie Condon, Joe Sullivan, and Gene Krupa. But what of a Beiderbecke session attended by, say, Armstrong, Jack Teagarden, Coleman Hawkins, Earl Hines, and Chick Webb?"

As Balliett often points out, it was the arrival of bebop and the revival of Dixieland that put the "lyricism" which he rightly admires in the great swing musicians out of fashion and the musicians themselves out of work. He is often led to confuse a musician's value with his role—real or imagined—in this process, and he therefore finds it hard to praise Dixieland and bebop musicians unstintingly, easy to overpraise swing musicians, and necessary to distort the facts of a musician's or a band's development now and then. Armstrong must be seen as having "perfected a soaring lyricism . . . that still seems boundless" in the early thirties, only after he had "abandoned New Orleans style," in which he had never been at home anyway because of his inability to become "a comfortable ensemble player." And Pee Wee Russell's recent playing must be seen as his best because it is only recently that he has finally "escaped his Dixieland bondage": a "confusing fact about Russell is

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that for almost two decades he has been chiefly identified with innumerable Eddie Condon groups, which over the years have created a distinctly sallow and mechanical tradition, compounded mainly of the more adaptable facets of New Orleans jazz, Chicago jazz, and small-band swing." But just as Armstrong never again matched his playing of the middle and late twenties, so Russell's best recorded playing was done with Condon groups, off and on from about 1938 to 1944—though what Balliett implies about the low quality of many of those groups is quite true. Similarly, in reviewing a Fletcher Henderson reissue album that includes records made between 1923 and 1938, Balliett doesn't even mention any of the pre-1930 selections by name—though in the twenties the band had at least as good soloists as it did in the thirties and, as Balliett more or less admits, it had better arrangements.

The cause of the trouble is not Balliett's taste, which is superb, but rather his unwillingness to think through his judgments until he can express them clearly and make them naturally fall into line with one another. Unless a musician is the object of a full-dress description, Balliett is likely to use his opinion of that musician as a weapon in his private propaganda war. Thus, having shown elsewhere that he knows Stan Kenton should not be grouped with real musicians like Parker and Gillespie, he can let himself refer resentfully to "the *nouvelle vague* of Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Stan Kenton," which "had, by the late forties, replaced almost completely such recent landmarks as Count Basie, Benny Goodman, Ben Webster, Art Tatum, and even Duke Ellington"; yet, when he addresses himself to the job of doing a column on Dizzy Gillespie, his judgment is sure, and Gillespie comes off as well as he deserves to.

One's general impression is that Balliett is a critic of enormous gifts who lets intellectual laziness and a fondness for fancy writing severely curtail his usefulness. And he also lets them distort his sense of his own role as a critic. An intelligent person who wanted to learn about jazz, picking up either of these collections, would be put off not only by the *New Yorker* mannerisms and the lack of intellectual coherence, but also by the way Balliett introduces himself and his writing. The introductions of both books move soddenly from the usual tiresome stuff about jazz being a subjective and personal music that seizes the heart rather than the head, through some worrying aloud about whether jazz ought to be written about at all, to half-hearted self-justification. In one case Balliett asserts that "the only excuse for collecting these pieces is that . . . they seem to me to form a kind of selective critical documentary of the most bewildering years in the music's brief history"; in the other he decides that because "the music is mercurial, and the curiosity about it is wide-

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spread, . . . perhaps an attempt should be made to pin down its sights and sounds on paper." But of course Balliett at his best does far more than this, and if his well-bred journalistic diffidence is discouraging to a reader who doesn't know jazz and is looking for guidance—and I have some evidence that it is, from people I have talked to—it is downright infuriating to someone who not only knows jazz but has also become aware of Balliett's abilities. Anyone who has worked as hard as Balliett to get his readers to hear what he hears must believe that jazz criticism should be written and that it should perform a genuinely critical, rather than a merely documentary, function. You wish he could simply come out and say so.

But with all that is undeniably wrong with Balliett, there are still no books on jazz that I could recommend as highly as these two to that intelligent prospective reader. I would suggest that he first get hold of some records by Ben Webster, Coleman Hawkins, Lester Young, Count Basie, Duke Ellington, Bix Beiderbecke, Fats Waller and Billie Holiday—if possible, records that Balliett describes in detail. Then he should read Balliett's columns on these musicians until they sink in, ignoring the faults and concentrating on the close descriptions, and going back and forth between record and description to see if Balliett's words apply to what he hears. If this works, he should get some records by post-bebop musicians, on whom Balliett is also very helpful: Thelonius Monk would be a good starter, then perhaps Sonny Rollins, then (if he really wants to go off the deep end) Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman. Balliett is his own worst enemy and needs to be taken with more than a grain of salt; but he should be taken nonetheless.

William Youngren

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PISANUS FRAXI, PORNOGRAPHER ROYAL

(*Continued from Page* 32)

consists of a letter written in a seventeenth-century German so illiterate as to be virtually indecipherable. The writer of this letter is a woman, and as far as can be made out she is hysterically lamenting the fact that her husband—at any rate some man—has a penis so enormous that coitus with him is impossible. The center of the page is neatly decorated with a perfectly drawn circle whose diameter is two and a half inches or six and a half centimeters, whichever side of the ruler you prefer to read. Although Ashbee is willing to admit that "medical science has made vast progress" since Schurig's time and that many of "his theories and notions have consequently been long since exploded," he continues to insist that "his vast erudition cannot be too much admired, nor can the value be underrated of the numberless pertinent *facts* which he has amassed, and for which he invariably gives his authorities." It is Ashbee who emphasizes the word "facts," and this leads us to suggest once more that we are dealing with a subject in which the idea of fact regularly ceases to have a signifiable meaning. In this context fact almost invariably comes to mean that somebody wrote, said, or dreamt it; this regressive sense of reality is, I should suggest, a principal requirement for any prolonged involvement with this subject. It is, furthermore, a sense of reality quite compatible with the process of forgetting from one book to the next what one has read.

A final resemblance which Ashbee implicitly draws between himself and Schurig has to do with style. Schurig wrote in what Ashbee describes as "the macaronic style frequently used by the learned Germans of the time," an irregular mixture of Latin and German, which bears certain similarities to the macaronic verse from which the term is derived. Ashbee finds this style to have "real charm," and defends it against modern detraction by assimilating it to the style of *The Anatomy of Melancholy.* Ashbee's habit of interpersing his prose with quotations in a number of languages may be regarded as a latter-day equivalent of Schurig's macaroni.

As for Ashbee's own English prose, that is something else again. At certain moments of stress, as we have seen, its logic tends to break

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down and reveal behind it the logic of unconscious processes and associations. Its tone is often blurred and uncertain, as in the following. "For while in France, in Italy, and even in Germany," he writes in the Introduction to the *Index,* "some of the most esteemed authors have not hesitated to write licentious books, with us the veriest grubbians only have, as a rule, put their pens at the disposal of Venus and Priapus." On the one hand, this is a representative specimen of "period style"; one would not be surprised to find such a passage in, say, Bulwer-Lytton—the fake elegance, the tinsel periphrases, and the dead euphemisms are perfectly familiar. On the other, its archness, coyness, and donnish drollery are themselves compatible with a certain kind of pornographic style. The workings of that style can be readily demonstrated. In Volume III Ashbee is noticing a work entitled *Love's Tell-Tale; or; The Decameron of Pleasure,* a slightly changed reprinting in 1865 of a work which first appeared about 1830. The first story in the book is called "Little Miss Curious's Tale," and Ashbee undertakes to summarize it for the reader.

"Between little Miss Curious, when in her tenth or eleventh year, and her father's servant, Henry, a friendship springs up. She watches him, and between the chinks of his bedroom door observes while he is allaying the ardour of his temperament in solitude. One day, while chasing a butterfly in the garden, little Miss Curious fall upon a stake, which penetrates the part destined for the reception of a more pliable instrument. Henry is at hand, carries his young mistress into a summer house, extracts the stake, and laves the wounded part. The ice is now broken—miss is no longer reserved before Henry, but allows him every possible freedom. He, however, restrains himself, and does not endeavour to snatch the last favour until one day, he surprises her in the summer house, asleep, with her person exposed, when, after a little gentle masturbation, he makes a partial attempt upon her virginity. The damsel wakes, and Henry hastily hides his member. Miss, however, determines to bring matters to an issue, and drags the now crest-fallen limb from its concealment. Her youthful fingers soon produce renewed vigor, and to her great satisfaction she watches at her ease that operation of nature which she had hitherto only indistinctly perceived through the cracks of the door. She now begs Henry to complete her education, which after obtaining her promise of secrecy, he does that same night in her own 'little bed,' she being only 12 years old."

This is, to be sure, not bad of its kind (providing that one forgets, as Dr. Johnson said, that a man could write like this forever if he would but abandon his mind to it). It is leisurely and smooth, and

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contains several literate touches. But beneath its surface one detects an endless searching for "new" terms or equivalents. For though repetition is a central formal attribute of pornography, this repetition is set within a context which also demands that it be accompanied by minute, mechanical variations in both general arrangement and language—thereby delivering it from the onus of "mere" repetition. Like the murder mystery and Hollywood movie, pornography is an extremely conventionalized form of expression. Departures from the convention are confined to a limited number of formulae, and anything more radical is likely to end in violation of the convention and failure rather than in transcendance and transformation. Ashbee's prose, it can be seen, falls well within the boundaries of the convention, and it is therefore not a prose we can count on for its strong grasp on the actual. In the passage I have cited, Ashbee's prose flows smoothly, without a halt, bump, or interruption about the incident of the little girl falling on the stake. What this indicates, simply, is that he has accommodated himself to the reality of the convention—in the pornographic fantasy, as in the comic cartoon, one can be destroyed or dismembered without being hurt. To some extent, of course, any experience of any art requires such an accommodation; in pornography the degree of envelopment by the fantasy tends to be larger, the submission of one's sense of reality to the fantasy more peremptory and absolute. (It may be able to succeed in this requirement because the threshold for such fantasies is in most men quite low.)

This confusion of fantasy and reality, this interfusion of various levels of perception is not in Ashbee confined to those areas I have already referred to. The process continues to generalize itself and invade other parts of his intellect. In the end Ashbee is unable to resist his own impulses, and what began as investigation of a literature concludes as propaganda for a reality. Ashbee devotes a great deal of space in his three volumes, for example, to the extensive literature of flagellation. And he does start some effort to sort out fantasy from reality, introducing material from personal memoirs, letters, interviews with friends as a kind of evidential check on the literature. But at last he is overpowered by the literature, by the strength of the fantasy, that is by the strength of desire. "Women," he concludes, "delight in administering the birch; and innumerable are the tales of schoolmistresses whipping their pupils, mothers, and especially mothers-in-law, their children, and taking grim pleasure in the operation. Indeed women are more cruel and relentless than men. . . ." The logic of this passage is instructive. That children were beaten as punishment cannot be doubted; it is no less true that sexual fantasies of flagellation were

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widespread, as the enormous literature devoted to the subject demonstrates; and it is also true that a certain number of men acted out these fantasies, resorting in the main to prostitutes who would beat them or consent to be beaten. At this point, however, a shift in levels of reality occurs, and the masculine sexual fantasy is projected onto women. The elements of this fantasy are, very simply, that women instigate this practice, that they perpetuate it, and that they experience, as do the men concerned, a specific and directly-felt sexual pleasure from it. There is no evidence in support of this contention, there never was any, and if Ashbee had been able to disentangle himself from the material that he reproduces in his pages he would have been able without much effort to make this out. But if we look back at the sentences I have quoted, we can see that the key term, logically and syntactically, is "the tales"—its placement and ambiguity allow the shift in reality to take place. Ashbee also accepts as fact the legend of "a female whipping club," of a group or "society of ladies who meet together for the mutual application of the birch." This fantasy has been, at least since the end of the eighteenth century, a permanent presence in the literature of flagellation. The club's place of venue may change, but all else remains the same; and when one meets with it in the latest jazzed-up versions put out by the Olympia Press it is like coming across an old if slightly frayed and tattered friend.

The tendency I have been discussing is generalized still further, and the most astonishing sections of Ashbee's work are the more than three hundred pages which deal with anti-clerical literature. Ashbee himself is an anti-cleric of the simplest description; "every system of theology," he asserts, "has, sooner or later, become alloyed with immoral doctrines, impure rites, or obscene practices and customs." To have any real force, naturally, his anti-clericalism must be directed at the "Church of Rome"; and joined with these sentiments is a classic, uninflected rationalism. "Every reflecting mind must find it difficult to understand how, in the present nineteenth century, a system so false, prurient, and polluted, can still be believed in, can find devotees ready to lay down their lives in its support, and even make converts of men of knowledge, experience, and bright parts. For, whether we consider the absurd miracles which are even to-day being palmed off upon the credulous; the blunders, crimes and follies of the infallible popes; the vices and hypocrisy of many of the clergy, both regular and secular; the duplicity, lax teaching, infamous doctrines, and dishonest commercial dealings of the jesuits; the scandalous quarrels which have taken place between the different orders, and the irregularities and licentiousness which have at all times distinguished

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monastic institutions, both male and female; their useless asceticism, puerile macerations, and their flagellations, at once absurd, cruel and indecent; the gross oppression and horrid cruelties of the inquisition; the terrible system of auricular confession, and the abuse which has been made of it; the coarse, scurrilous, abusive and licentious discourses . . . etc., etc., etc." This sentence is distributed across nineteen pages of Ashbee's text; the top of each page contains one, two, or three lines; virtually every word is superscribed with a footnote marking, and the notes themselves take up the body of the page. Their contents are what one might expect, as are the contents of the three hundred succeeding pages. To sum up in brief what cannot here be entered upon at length, Ashbee's obsession with the sins of Rome is the counterpart and analogue of his interest in pornography. What he experiences with direct sexual pleasure in pornography he experiences with the added pleasure of moral indignation in relation to Rome. For Roman Catholicism is a pornographer's paradise, and there is, as they say, evidence to back up every change. All priests are lechers, satyrs, and pimps, all nuns are concubines or lesbians or both. The confessional is the locus of meeting of lubricity and piety. This perfect balance of outrage and envy is matched by a similar ambivalence of idea; the Church of Rome, like everyone's parents, is at once ascetically denying us the gratification of our impulses and hypocritically wallowing in a wholly sexualized existence, making love over the nasty stye. One thinks wistfully of what Newman could have done had he access to this volume when he prepared his *Lectures on the Present Position of Catholics in England.*

In the course of this extended assault on Rome, Ashbee treats in detail certain English works from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. These are mostly anti-Catholic narratives, confessions, and records of testimony given at trials; and they contain by far the best and most interesting writing of anything within Ashbee's three volumes, arising as they do out of the world of Bunyan and Fox and the folk-tradition of English dissent, and retaining, even in their madness, some of that tradition's vividness of language and feeling. But Ashbee is too preoccupied with his indictment of Rome to consider that he has come across something that looks like literature. This is worth noting if only because one of Ashbee's explicit intentions is to apply critical judgment to the works he treats. The character of that judgment is easily illustrated. In the *Index* Ashbee notices a small volume of sonnets, *Les Amies, scène d'amour sapphique*, written supposedly by one Pablo de Herlagnèz. Ashbee comments, "These sonnets, 6 in number, are pretty, but display no great talent," and then adds, "The author's

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real name is Paul Verlaine." One has to admit that this is very easy hunting; besides, anyone could make such an error. A more representative instance of Ashbee's critical procedure can be extracted from his discussion of an eighteenth-century book of stories, *L'Année Galante*, which he doesn't regard very favorably. "The book is divided into 12 chapters," runs his comment, "each bearing the name of a month, for which there seems to be no *raison d'être*, as the adventures have no affinity to the season in which they are told." So much for the weather. And here is his descriptive evaluation of one of Rowlandson's obscene plates, *The Larking Cull*. "A bed room; toilet table to the left, looking-glass hanging on the wall to the right, a pot of flowers on a small table at the back, all prettily drawn. Two figures; the youth's member is very large, and unnaturally tapered at the end, a form particularly affected by Rowlandson. Pleasure is depicted on the faces of both actors." That last sentence rings in the ear as if it were a sepulchral admonition; one can almost hear Mrs. Wilfer saying it. As for his general critical idea of the history of English pornographic writing, Ashbee commits himself to the notion that since Cleland things have been going downhill. The reason for this deterioration is that later writers have been influenced by Sade "and have copied the cynicism, cruelty, and impracticable lasciviousness which he made the distinctive feature of his books. Thus, the nature of English erotic fiction has been changed, and its wholesome tone (if any book of the kind can be called wholesome) entirely lost." It seems to me that Ashbee's qualifications, intentions, and achievements as a critic are fairly captured by his use of the word "impracticable."

Ashbee may be regarded as coming under the class of minds described by Arnold in "The Literary Influence of Academies"—provincial, eccentric, Persian in their excessiveness, withal original. What makes Ashbee particularly susceptible to such characterization is that his subject is itself originally invested with those qualities and is thus designed to elicit the latent irregularities and distortions in the mind which undertakes to deal with it. We may also regard him as belonging to the group of English gentlemen-amateur scholars, private persons who turned a personal interest, hobby, avocation, passion, or mania to good account. These range from someone like Mr. Casaubon at one end of the scale to someone like the Fowler brothers at the other. Ashbee falls about in the middle: the nature of his interests pushes him in the direction of Mr. Casaubon, while the actuality of his achievement tends to raise him above his subject. Although in the preceding pages I have subjected him to rather severe analysis, my purpose in doing so was not disparagement. In the first place I

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wanted to demonstrate in part how a mind like Ashbee's works and how, historically, the investigation of pornography is itself to a remarkable degree an example of the phenomenon being investigated. Secondly, a balance had to be redressed, since the few brief discussions of Ashbee's works which exist in English, French, and German are absurdly disproportionate in their uncritical praise. Such adulation, one may add, is a disservice to Ashbee, since it tends to obscure his actual accomplishment. Nevertheless, it would be unfair to close an essay on him without giving the reader some further notion of that accomplishment.

IV

The one part of Ashbee's mind in whose sense of reality we can place unlimited confidence is that part which deals with the books themselves—with their external specifications, dates, titles, printing history, and variant editions; and with their internal specifications in the sense of an accurate account of their narrative contents. Connected with this is Ashbee's extensive knowledge of the pornographic publishing trade as it grew and flourished during the nineteenth century. Being the chief European collector of his time, he was naturally intimate with the workings of that industry and with the customs and practices of the entrepreneurs who gained their livelihood in it. The principal circumstance of that trade is its obscurity, and as we have seen, Ashbee himself often complains of the difficulties of amassing evidence or of finding out anything at all. Yet he has brought more light to this darkness than anyone else.

One of the first things to be learned from a study of Ashbee's volumes is that by the mid-Victorian period the pornographic scene had established itself in very much the same modes, categories, and varieties as exist today. Alongside of works which fumbled toward giving a scientific account of sexuality were grouped volumes describing the "rites" and "practices" of certain curious sexual and religious cults, volumes which purported to be anthropology of some kind, volumes of folklore, and a whole range of sex and marriage manuals of differing inflammatory intensity but uniformly equal ineptitude and disingenuousness. Fiction presented a familiar visage. From the outer circles in which there floated about stories, novelettes, and whole novels of a sentimental-witty-racy kind, known in the trade as "galanterie," one proceeded slowly and by gradually increasing degrees of openness in the use of language and description of events to the center, the hard core. Reprinting of old favorites went on apace, and there was a brisk trade in translations, re-translations, and back-translations—one of the tricks of the business being the

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creation of new works by a process that may be called progressive mutilation. The trick consists of re-translating a work exclusively from its last immediate translation, so that, say, by the time a work originally entitled *The Romance of Lust*, published first in English in 1879, appears in a new English version, published in Paris within the last fifteen years, it has a new title and new characters and has gone through the following additional metamorphoses. This new English translation was made from a French translation published at around the turn of the century, which had in turn been translated from a German rendering, which was itself a translation from an earlier French translation of the original and now as good as unrecognizable English. There was also a steady trickle of new works of fiction, the demand for new material being essentially constant and stable in what is always a seller's market. Periodical publications of different degrees of openness and addressed to differing sexual preferences and different social classes were also to be had, some with illustrations and some without. In 1832 Louis Daguerre announced the discovery of his process to the French Academy of Science; shortly thereafter a lively business in photographs of a sexual nature got under way.[4] Pornography supplied an invention of its own; in 1828 a machine "to flog gentlemen upon" was manufactured for Mrs. Theresa Berkeley, a prostitute who specialized in flagellation and who was, according to Ashbee, "the queen of her profession." Ashbee reproduces an engraving of this contraption; it resembles a large football blocking-dummy and may be thought of as perversity's contribution to the Industrial Revolution. The single modern convenience of which the Victorians were deprived was moving pictures. We find then that in this area of culture, as in so many others, the Victorian period is essentially continuous with our own.

Among the chief adornments of this subculture were the book-

4 Ashbee tells us of an English photographer named Henry Hayler, "whose photographic studies from life enjoy an European reputation." In 1874 the police descended on two London houses in which Hayler conducted his operations, and "no less than 130,248 obscene photographs, and 5,000 slides were seized and destroyed. Hayler himself absconded, and thereby escaped punishment; he went to Berlin, but has not been heard of publicly since." Ashbee goes on to quote a newspaper report which stated that "in the more offensive pictures were discernible the portraits of the owner of the house, his wife, and two sons." To this it may be added that by the end of the century a new convention had become part of the stock-in-trade of pornographic fiction; novels now occasionally contained within them a scene describing some part of the workings of the pornographic industry itself. And by today several pornographic novels whose excuse for a subject is the pornography business—that is to say, pornographic novels about pornography—have been published.

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sellers John Camden Hotten and William Dugdale. Both of them appear to have been personally known to Ashbee, and he supplies us with a good deal of information about the way they ran their operations. Hotten seems to have been, so to say, the Maurice Girodias of Victorian England; he was, as Ashbee observes, "almost the only respectable English publisher of tabooed literature," a circumstance in which "he took great delight." As is well known, Hotten published Swinburne's *Poems and Ballads,* agreeing to take over the volume after Moxon's had withdrawn it from circulation because of the violent reception it had met with in the press. He also seems to have had a hand in the publication and popularization of American writers in England. Hotten's life was short—he was born in 1832 and died in 1873—but very active. Ashbee writes that "his private library of erotic literature was extensive, and was, at his death, purchased *en bloc* by a London amateur." That amateur, there is reason to believe, was Ashbee himself, since in his small essay on Hotten he reprints some of Hotten's scribblings toward an autobiographical narrative, and adds that these are from "a MS still existing in his own handwriting."

Hotten was born in London and, according to his own account, "showed a great passion for books" at an early age. At the age of fifteen, he prevailed upon one Petheram, "the author of an Anglo-Saxon Grammar, and other kindred works" and owner of a book shop, to allow him to spend a few hours each day in the shop. Thomas Babington Macaulay, Hotten's account proceeds, "used to make daily visits to Mr. Petheram's shop for the purpose of securing any old books and tracts which might suit his collections. I used to lay aside anything which I thought might interest the historian, and would often submit to him memoranda of books I had seen elsewhere. These little attentions made me a favorite with Macaulay, who however, on one occasion when in an irritable mood, threatened me with chastisement for not speedily obtaining change for a £5.-Note, and in the heat of the moment actually did topple upon me a large quarto volume which he held in his hand at the time." It is difficult to determine to what extent young Hotten's brains were scrambled by the trauma of this event, but it is certain that something went wrong. Soon after this, the narrative continues, Hotten departed for the West Indies, accompanying an elder brother on "a Robinson Crusoe scheme of adventure," whatever that may mean. Eventually the brothers wound up in New Orleans, where they separated, the elder going off to Minnesota, and Hotten himself accepting "the offer of a gentleman to accompany him to"—of all places—Galena, Illinois. One knows what has to come next, and it does: "The Tannery of Mr. Grant, now

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President Grant, lay just below my rooms. . . . I knew him very well, and certainly never supposed from his quiet manner that he would reach his present position." In 1854 Hotten made his way back to England—the autobiographical fragment ends here—and in 1855, Ashbee tells us, he began business "in a very small shop, No. 151b Piccadilly, directly opposite the larger establishment which acquired a world wide renown under his rule." He soon became successful, and at the time of his death in 1873 had placed himself, according to the obituary tribute of a friend, "at the very summit of his calling." "A modest tombstone," in Highgate Cemetery, Ashbee writes, "was erected to his memory by the London booksellers."

Hotten's character is sufficiently revealed to us by his memorializing friend. "During the last eight years he occupied a position as publisher second to none in the trade. His acuteness in feeling the pulse of the bookmarket, in gauging the public taste, and supplying it with exactly the sort of literary pabulum it required, was truly extraordinary." Whether or not we agree with the idea that pornography is a species of breakfast cereal, there is no doubt that Hotten pursued his occupation with energy and vigor. Indeed, concludes his friend: "His fertile brain seemed never to be at rest. He overtasked it, and it has at last given way under the strain." This may be the first recorded instance of death caused by brain fever brought on by pornography; on the other hand, one wonders whether he ever fully recovered from that beaning he got from Macaulay.

Out of a number of examples I have chosen three to illustrate Hotten's dealings. In 1865 Hotten reprinted Richard Payne Knight's famous *A Discourse on the Worship of Priapus.* First published in 1786, this work is antiquarian in kind, and may be thought of as proto-archeology or proto-anthropology. Although the first printing of this book could not have been large, Knight came in for a certain amount of strong criticism for writing publicly on such a subject and seems to have made an effort to suppress or recall as many volumes as he could. Ashbee himself appears not to have owned a copy of it, since he notes that a copy of the original edition is to be found "in the reserved library of the British Museum," the same institution to which Knight, on his death in 1824, bequeathed that "collection of antiquities, which became the pride of his life," and which his large personal fortune had enabled him to amass—there is a tradition for these things. Hotten's reprinting has added to it another essay, longer than Knight's, and entitled *An Essay on the Worship of the Generative Powers During the Middle Ages of Western Europe.* This work, Ashbee informs us, is "from the pen of Mr. Thomas Wright,

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assisted by Sir James Emerson Tennet, and Mr. George Witt." Wright was also an antiquary; he took his degree at Cambridge in 1834, and was one of the founders of the Camden Society, and of the British Archeological Society. His essay seems to have been written at about the time of Hotten's reprinting, and since it exists at exactly the same stage of intellectual development as Knight's work, which preceded it by some eighty years, it strikes one as being less justified.

Hotten's issue of this printing was in 125 copies only, Ashbee specifies, "of which 6 on large paper, price, to subscribers (only), small paper £4. 10s, large paper £10. 10s; Roxburg binding." If this notation is correct we get an idea of the part of the market at which Hotten was aiming: it was very small and very rich. There is, however, some ambiguity in that parenthetical "only": it may mean that this volume was sold only by subscription, or even by subscription in advance, Hotten circularizing his customers and raising enough money to pay for the printing beforehand, as certain European printing houses do today; or it may possibly mean, since the specification is written by Ashbee, that this was the price paid only by those who subscribed, and that a customer walking in off the street might get it at a knocked-down figure, or that Hotten would sell it for whatever he could get—a practice common enough in bookselling of this kind. Hotten did write a circular for this issue, which Ashbee happily reproduces, and it gives us a chance of examining that great man's prose. "This is a very extraordinary volume," its simple eloquence runs, "upon a subject that is now attracting the almost universal attention of the learned and curious in Europe." One of the distinctive attributes of publishers of pornography, we shall often see, is their peculiar sense of time. There follows a short ramble through the subject of the volume, and the circular closes with this paragraph: "As *only one hundred and twenty-five* copies have been privately printed, and the great libraries of Europe have absorbed many of these, the volume will soon become one of the RAREST OF MODERN BOOKS. *Five* or *six* copies, it is understood, have been printed on LARGE PAPER." This is of course the usual come-on, and in the bit about the great libraries of Europe contains the familiar, pleasant fantasy of megalomania. I say fantasy of megalomania because it is hard to imagine anyone believing this nonsense—not Hotten or his customers. But it is all part of the ritual, as is the last sentence, which serves to thicken the atmosphere of the arcane. In it Hotten is acting as a front or agent for himself, and by this slight removal of himself from the scene of the crime seems to imply that the real pornographer is the printer's boy.

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In the course of his summary of the contents of this volume, Hotten offers his customers a few examples of Priapus worship; one of these, he states, is "the horse-shoe placed over a stable or other door, or nailed to the orchard-gate," which represents "nothing more or less than a bent priapus—the twisted and perverted emblem of an ancient creed, that numbered, probably, more devout followers than any other humanly-devised system of worship." This seems like a charming, if distinctly odd, pseudo-fact until one consults the passage in Wright's essay to which it refers. "Thus the figure of the female organ," Wright states, "easily assumed the rude form of a horseshoe, and as the original meaning was forgotten, would be readily taken for that object, and a real horseshoe nailed up for the same purpose. In this way orignated . . . the vulgar practice of nailing a horseshoe upon buildings to protect them and all they contain against the power of witchcraft." One need not from this conclude that confusion of mind is always accompanied by confusion of sex. This little slip in the life of a busy pornographer does, however, help to reveal the typical care with which Hotten took his subject to himself and dramatizes the motto of his business—anything goes.

The second example concerns a work which Hotten intended as another sequel to Payne Knight's treatise. This book was written by John Davenport, a semi-learned pornographic hack whom Ashbee regards with a certain amount of sympathy and respect. The book is called *Aphrodisiacs and Anti-Aphrodisiacs,* and Ashbee speaks of it as "an able and erudite work, well written, and fairly exhaustive of the subjects it treats of." It is none of these, unless one equates learning with the ability to copy out one's notes or repeat stories; in this sense gossip is a form of erudition. At the bottom of the title page is printed, "London: Privately Printed. 1869." The work was in fact printed in 1873—Hotten died before it came out of the press. But the custom of back-dating a new text is as common in this business as the practice of up-dating an old one; and one may add that in about half the cases of this practice no conceivable function is served. Except perhaps a psychological one—namely, that in the pornography business one should try as a rule never to tell the truth about anything; one should in fact lie on principle and transform petty fraud into a way of life. Hotten also wrote a circular in advertisement of this work, whose first paragraph reads: "Beautifully printed on toned paper, and only ONE HUNDRED COPIES, for private distribution. . . . £2. 10s." In reality, Ashbee lets us know, two hundred and fifty copies were printed; about half of these were sold in Europe, and the remainder went *"en bloc"* to J. W. Bouton of New York, a bookseller with

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whom Hotten had previous dealings. This illustrates the almost universal custom of misrepresenting the number of copies of a privately printed and "limited" edition. Most of the time the direction taken by this misrepresentation is to announce fewer copies than are actually printed; occasionally, however, one finds an inexplicable instance of the reverse.

The third illustration is my personal favorite, one of Hotten's wilder aberrations, and a kind of masterpiece of senseless obfuscation. In 1872 he reprinted seven works on flagellation, adding to them the date 1777, which is of course false. He also entitled the whole series as *Library Illustrative of Social Progress. From the Original Editions collected by the late Henry Thomas Buckle, Author of "A History of Civilization in England."* In a fly-sheet which Hotten distributed among his private customers, he expanded on these circumstances. "It is well known," he wrote, "that the late Henry Thomas Buckle . . . collected a large library of curious books. Amongst the many topics that engaged his attention was the subject of CHASTISEMENT, viz., discipline with a Birch or other implement. By rare good fortune, he collected an almost complete set of the astounding books issued by George Peacock, in the last century, and as no other examples of some of these rarities are known to exist, it is proposed to privately print a few copies as 'Curiosities of Literature.' Apart from their extreme rarity, the works are remarkable for the light they throw upon the state of society in the last century, and the mania that possessed all classes for chastising and being chastised." He goes on to describe the volumes and their price and lists their titles. Having reprinted this circular, Ashbee then rises up in what for him (Rome always in the exception) is the closest he ever comes to wrath—he was ever the mildest of debunkers. "Now in all this," he writes, "there is not a word of truth; the original tracts did not come from the library of Buckle, nor had he, in all probability, ever seen them. All seven had been for many years, and are still, in the possession of a well known London collector [guess who?] . . . . The fact is the present possessor of the volume in question lent it to Hotten, who had it surreptitiously reprinted, without the owner's permission or knowledge." One need not conjecture a reconstruction of the event, which must in any case have been simple enough. The striking thing about it is its aimlessness: one can't even determine whether Hotten meant it as a joke. Its floating and incoherent irrelevance, however, is representative of a genre whose only secret sometimes seems to be its ability to persuade the reader that psychosis is merely a heightened form of normality.

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John Camden Hotten managed to keep a toehold in the respectable world. Nothing of the kind can be said of William Dugdale who in the back-alley society of the pornography trade was, like T. S. Eliot's Macavity cat, "the Napoleon of crime." Born in 1800, this regular out-and-outer was, in Ashbee's words, "one of the most prolific publishers of filthy books." He carried on his business in a variety of locations in the vicinity of Drury Lane, Wych Street, and Holywell Street, and worked under the cover of such names as Turner, Smith, Young, and Brown. He spent a good deal of time in prison, and died in 1868 in the House of Correction. There is nothing he would not try, and some of his shifts are of a desperate ingenuity. He was a master of the racket of reprinting. He would, for example, take a work which was some fifty years old, alter but not entirely change the text and title—adding something in the way of further spice to both—and then reprint it as a new work, at two guineas a throw. He would then take this volume, divide it in half, add a few pages of new matter to each half, and publish it as another new work in two volumes, this time for three guineas. He published anything he could lay his hands on—from bawdy songsters at 6d. or 1/ to the gaudiest volumes for as much as he could wheedle. He reprinted the pornography of other pornographic publishers, sometimes changing the title, sometimes not bothering to; and he reprinted his own in as many sizes, shapes, and forms as he could invent—a true pirate, he even tried to steal from himself. He would not only reprint old works and fob them off as new; he would do the reverse. *The New Epicurean; or, The Delights of Sex, Facetiously and Philosophically Considered, in Graphic Letters Addressed to Young Ladies of Quality* was one of his productions; at the bottom of the title page ran the legend "A New Edition. London: 1740. [Reprinted 1865.]" This was in fact no reprint but an original work, and 1865 was the date of its first publication.

Another one of his strategems for swindling was to take sections or chapters from novels, give them a new title and print them as complete works. His printing and illustrations, as Ashbee observes, were almost uniformly of "villainous execution." He printed books purporting to be translations from the French but which were actually English or American in origin. Frequently it is impossible to know what language his publications were written in originally, since most of the time, as Ashbee neatly puts it, his publications only indicate that "a careless printer had added his blunders to those of an illiterate author." He sometimes printed works which had teasing titles, such as *Intrigues and Confessions of a Ballet Girl,* which was followed by a racy and suggestive subtitle, but which was in content altogether

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innocent. He strikes one as a person who had a mania for print combined with a mania for concealment; and in a pinch he sometimes wrote his own pornography, *The Convent School, or Early Experiences of A Young Flagellant,* by "Rosa Belinda Coote," coming from his own free pen. He wrote his own descriptive and advertising copy, and as a sample of his prose, here is part of his blurb for *La Rose d'Amour,* an American pornographic novelette which he palmed off as a translation from the French. "One of the most remarkable works of the present day. Possessed of unbounded wealth, and of frame and of stamina of body apparently inexhaustible . . . this hero ravishes, seduces, and ruins all the females that come within his reach—rich and poor, gentle and simple, rough and refined, all fall down before his sceptre of flesh, his noble truncheon, his weapon of war. His great passion is for maidenheads, for young and unfledged virgins. . . . He travels the seas for new victims of his raging lust; he buys maidenheads by the score, he initiates them in all the mysteries of Venus, and finally, retires to his chateau with a seraglio of beauties. . . . Every page is a picture of sensual delight, and the book is illustrated with Sixteen Coloured Designs equal to the text. It is in two vols, and the price is Three guineas." One has to be possessed of a special kind of talent to be able to achieve such abolute anonymity, such level deadness of style; and it is not anticipating too much to say that in the writers and publishers of pornography, and in pornography itself, a certain kind of mechanical excitement of emotions through mechanical means, which has since spread itself throughout modern culture in general, is met with in an early and primitive form.

Dugdale was the publisher of the famous "Don Leon" poems, supposedly by and about Byron. He himself apparently believed that they were genuine, and before he committed the manuscript to print approached a friend of Ashbee's and asked this man "to advise him as to how he could best approach Lady Byron, from whom he expected to get a large sum to suppress the publication." This attempt at extortion came to nothing, and Dugdale went back to his plain and fancy buccaneering. He was also one of the chief publishers during the Victorian period of pornographic periodicals. One of the writers who both translated stories for his magazines and supplied him with original material was James Campbell. And Campbell, we know, was a close associate of Ashbee's. The organic filaments that bind this little world or sub-culture together come into sight once again, and we see that the Olympian Ashbee and the subterranean Dugdale are connected by something more than a casual common interest. Yet it is Ashbee himself who has helped us to see even this far.

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ARGUMENTS

THE EDITOR'S RITE

In her book, *Ernest Newman,* Vera Newman reports one incident in Newman's career that I have personal reasons for finding especially interesting. Before describing it I should say something about what it involved. Bernard Shaw, at the time he was writing some of the finest music criticism ever written, observed that editors, "by some law of Nature which still baffles science," were always ignorant of music—a characteristic overstatement of the fact that most editors lack special competence in this field. And aware of this, they usually engage a man with the special knowledge of music they lack, and allow him to operate without interference. What they don't realize is that a man may have knowledge of the literature of music, its techniques and forms, its terminology—all that is acquired through specifically musical education—but may lack the perception and judgment and taste that make a musically educated person into a good critic; and since this lack is something most editors are unable to detect, most of the published criticism of music is worthless. But that isn't all. Shaw went on to say that all he had to do was write that the second subject appeared in the key of the dominant, and an editor capable of recognizing skill and the lack of it in writing on any other subject would let Shaw fill his columns "with pompous platitude, with . . . bad grammar, bad logic . . . [and] every conceivable blunder and misdemeanor that a journalist can commit," as long as he did this in his capacity as music critic. In other words, editors accept from a music critic not only the bad criticism they are not competent to evaluate, but even the bad thinking and bad writing they *are* competent to evaluate. It was not surprising that the editors of the *Times* didn't recognize Harold C. Schonberg's failure as a critic when he reported the eccentricities and perversities of Glenn Gould's playing in Brahms's D-minor Concerto without placing them in their context of the impressive operation of Gould's powers even in that eccentric and perverse performance. But it was amazing that the editors of a paper as concerned with propriety and decorum as the *Times* should have tolerated a performance by Schonberg that was

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as unprecedented in the extremes of its ostentatious vulgarity and offensiveness as Gould's had been in the extremes of its slow tempos:

> . . . So then the Gould boy comes out, and you know what, Ossip? . . . The Gould boy played the Brahms D-minor Concerto slower than the way we used to practice it. (And between you, me, and the corner lamppost, Ossip, maybe the reason he plays it so slow is maybe his technique is not so good.) . . .

And it was amazing to find in the *Times* a prose that proceeded on the level of "Every now and then Mr. Richter played a phrase in the most ravishing manner possible. Then he would turn around and play without apparent liaison with the previous phrase." Similarly one was not surprised that the editors of the *Herald Tribune* didn't recognize the deficiencies of perception in what Paul Henry Lang wrote about Gesualdo or Berlioz; but one was amazed that they should have tolerated Lang's atrocious writing, his outrageously offensive references to Stravinsky's professional collaboration with Robert Craft. And one is amazed again that they should tolerate the archly boyish gushing of their not *that* young new critic, Alan Rich—about how "all the things that are wrong with [Menotti's *The Last Savage*] just don't seem to matter," since "there comes a time when high esthetic principles must be thrown to the winds, and this, dear reader, is the time"; about how the eclectic Menotti has this time "made the whole continent of Europe his oyster. America too, for that matter; didn't we hear Sardula's Act Three aria in 'The Sound of Music'? Of course we did. But how seductive it all is! . . . Only a churl could cavil at such treasures, hollow as they may be"; about the production that "is gorgeous beyond dreams," the cast that is "glorious," the orchestra that is "right on its tippy-twinkletoes."

The incident reported by Mrs. Newman, on the other hand, was one in which an editor, despite his lack of special competence, did attempt to exercise control over the music critic's operation. In 1950, when Newman had been writing for the *Sunday Times* of London for more than thirty years as the most prominent music critic of his time, one of his weekly articles was returned to him by the paper's new editor, who thought it suitable only for the small group of musicologists and asked for one that would be addressed to a larger group of the paper's half-million readers. In reply, after pointing out that this was the first time in all the years he had been writing that an article had been returned to him by an editor, Newman raised the question whether he or the editor was better qualified to be the judge of what the more intelligent part of the musical public was interested in reading about.

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And when the editor asserted an editor's right to criticize the contribution even of a specialist, and to remind a contributor, however eminent, of the audience he was writing for, Newman answered that he didn't question an editor's general right to decide what shall or shall not go into his paper, but was "amazed at the suggestion that I, who have been in the musical world all my life, and in musical journalism for nearly fifty years of it, know less about the mentality of the reading musical public, the general level of its musical knowledge, the topics in which it is interested . . . than someone . . . who is not himself a man of musical culture and in daily touch with the musical world. . . ." The force of this statement didn't impel the editor to publish the article he had rejected; but Newman was allowed to operate without interference after that.

My interest in this incident is the result of my own experience of this kind when in August 1955, because of *The Nation*'s increasing financial difficulties, Freda Kirchwey, who had been publisher and editor of the magazine for most of the nineteen years I had been writing my music column in it, turned it over to George G. Kirstein as publisher and Carey McWilliams as editor. Before describing what happened after August 1955 I must describe the conditions under which I worked before that. Until 1953 the Books and the Arts section was edited by Margaret Marshall with complete independence; and *The Nation*'s readers included those who disliked its political writing but bought the magazine for its excellent book reviews, some of which provided a corrective for the political writing of J. Alvarez del Vayo, Alexander Werth, I. F. Stone and others like them, and its columns on the arts—Miss Marshall's on the theater, James Agee's on films, Clement Greenberg's on painting, mine on music.* It was admirable of Miss Kirchwey to have permitted this independent operation in the back section—which must frequently have embarrassed her—as long as she did; but at the beginning of 1953 the need to economize was given as an excuse for abolishing the position of literary editor, and with it a large part of the section Miss Marshall had edited. It now offered only one full-length signed book review and a few unsigned briefs; moreover a number of distinguished writers who had reviewed books in the section felt impelled by the dismissal of Miss Marshall to end their writing for the magazine (as I wanted to do but could not, since I had only my *Nation* job and was unable to find another of any kind). And this deterioration caused readers who had been getting the magazine

* EDITOR'S NOTE: Not everyone who knew *The Nation* during this period will agree with Mr. Haggin's assertion that the back section was not affected by the politics of the front. PR will be happy to publish comments.

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only for the back section to stop getting it (some wrote me that they continued to get it for my column).

As Miss Marshall, until 1953, ran her Books and the Arts section with complete independence within the magazine, I wrote my music column with complete independence within her section. I had begun in 1936 by taking over the already existing fortnightly record column; and the increasing interest in it led *The Nation* in 1939 to make it a weekly column on all musical matters, which in time acquired the character of a signed column of personal opinion. The choice of subject each week was mine: what interested me and I had reason to think—from their letters—interested my readers. For one thing the many in large cities and small towns all over the country—as well as the ones who bought records in New York—wanted my reports on music and performances on records. And while they were not interested in everything that happened in New York, which in any case I couldn't report on in a weekly column of 1,000 words, they *were* interested in reports on the New York concerts of outstanding performers whom they knew from records, and performances of the Metropolitan Opera, the New York Philharmonic and the other orchestras they knew from the radio. Also, they were interested in my occasional discussions of the ideas about music in books, articles and reviews. The writing was mine too: Miss Marshall was one of the rare editors who are willing to let a writer do his own writing if they think him competent to do so; which is to say that she not only didn't tamper with the writing herself but, when necessary, protected it against the compulsive depredations of the copy-editor. Nor is what I have been saying contradicted by the fact that now and then she would question a word or a sentence which bothered her, and on one occasion persuaded me to withdraw an article. It was, she said, one that she couldn't defend; and though she hadn't told me of such battles on my behalf I had an idea of what some of them might have been about.

I could recall receiving, one morning in the spring of 1940, a letter in which Miss Kirchwey asked me why I found it necessary to be so cantankerous, together with the week's issue of *The Nation* in which she defended the magazine against the charge that it was cantankerous: she took it as a matter of course that it was right for *The Nation* to point out the misrepresentations in a *Times* news report or editorial, but couldn't see that it was similarly right for *The Nation*'s music critic to point out the misrepresentations in an article by the *Times*'s music critic. But she had been persuaded to live up to *The Nation*'s proclaimed tradition by publishing my occasional discussions of other critics' writing though she disapproved of them; and she published

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several of them after taking charge of the back section in 1953. In the summer of 1954 she returned a column dealing with the volume of Jacques Barzun's translations of Berlioz letters, objecting that it dealt only with the errors in the translations and not with the letters; but she published it with only an additional paragraph on the letters when I insisted that the errors in the translations were what required reporting in this volume published as an example of Columbia University scholarship. In this Miss Kirchwey presumably was influenced by her awareness of such manifestations of high regard for the column as the letter of congratulation it brought from the distinguished English critic W. J. Turner, and of its popularity with the magazine's readers.

I have gone into all this to make it clear why in August 1955 I was, like Ernest Newman, unprepared for the rejection of two columns of mine that was only the beginning of the interference I was to experience thereafter. It was Mr. McWilliams—that tireless crusader for freedom of expression in speech and print—who rejected them on the grounds that the controversy at New York's City Center which they dealt with had occurred a few months earlier, and that I dealt not with the controversy but with what Olin Downes had written about it. Knowing nothing of the changes at *The Nation,* I addressed to Miss Kirchwey the reply in which I pointed out that these columns were in line with numerous earlier ones in which I had similarly dealt with a matter of public interest as it had been presented in the press, and that the refusal to accept them for publication was without precedent in my experience with *The Nation.* She answered that she had always disliked my "often vitriolic attacks" on other critics even when she hadn't protested them, and claimed—on the basis of her editor's responsibility for my column as for everything else in the magazine—the right to say no to their continuation. To this I replied that I couldn't accept her position that it was a proper exercise of the critic's function to point out the falsification of Moussorgsky's *Pictures at an Exhibition* by Horowitz's arrangement of it, but an improper "vitriolic attack" to point out the errors in Olin Downes's statements in justification of the arrangement; or that it was right for *The Nation* to comment on an editorial in the *Times,* but wrong for *The Nation*'s music critic to comment on an article by the *Times*'s critic. And concerning the relation of *The Nation* and my column I wrote that it had been, and should continue to be,

> the relation between the New York *Herald Tribune* and the columns of Lippmann and the Alsops and—when he was its music critic—Virgil Thomson. The *Herald Tribune*'s responsibility goes no further than its decision that the writing of these men is worth publishing—in its entirety, which means in its

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> varying quality; and having made this decision the *Herald Tribune* has felt obligated to publish columns by Lippmann and the Alsops that must have been gall and wormwood to its editors, and columns by Thomson which they must have disapproved of. *The Nation* has exactly the same responsibility and obligation, and for nineteen years has operated in exactly the same way, with my column—which is to say that in those nineteen years it has published a highly regarded total output that has included an occasional article you disliked. *The Nation* was right in so doing; and it will be right only if it continues to do so.

But Miss Kirchwey insisted that in deciding against these columns *The Nation* had not interfered unduly with my prerogatives as a regular contributor.

It was after these exchanges that I read in the *Times* about her transfer of *The Nation* to Mr. Kirstein. And a couple of weeks later Mr. McWilliams, notifying me that he had withdrawn my column from the September 24 issue because it included an obituary paragraph on Olin Downes, added that my earlier exchanges with Miss Kirchwey made it unnecessary for him to say—but he would say—that the Downes paragraph was objectionable because it was in extremely bad taste. In reply I reminded him of the passage on the proper relation of *The Nation* to my column that I quoted a moment ago from my letter to Miss Kirchwey, and added:

> If the *Herald Tribune* were to refuse to publish a column of Lippmann or the Alsops, *The Nation* would, correctly, call this censorship and suppression of opinion (as it did when the *World* refused to publish a column of Heywood Broun on the ground that it was in bad taste); and it remains censorship and suppression of opinion when *The Nation* does it.

Mr. McWilliams wrote that he wholly disagreed with the contention that it had been censorship and suppression of opinion when *The Nation* had dropped my September 24 column. And in connection with this and other matters relating to my column he suggested a conference with him and Mr. Kirstein at my convenience. I answered that since I was involved with the publication of a book, the conference would be inconvenient at any time just then; and I questioned the need for one, since our letters had made our positions on the refusal to publish my columns completely clear, and other matters could also be handled by correspondence. He now wrote that Mr. Kirstein and he felt a conference was absolutely necessary; and so it took place, inconveniently for me, early in October.

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It turned out that Mr. Kirstein, whom I met for the first time, had wanted the conference not to discuss the rejection of my columns but to inform me that on November 15 Robert Hatch would become editor of the back section, and that he had made it a condition of his acceptance of the editorship that he have complete control of the section, including the right to edit all copy and to determine the frequency of columns on the arts. Mr. Kirstein went on to say that since he was aware of the many years I had been writing my *Nation* column and of its popularity with the magazine's readers, he had felt that in fairness to me—and here I interrupt to say that at this point one might have supposed he was going to tell me that in fairness to me he had said to Mr. Hatch he could not give him such control over the column I had been writing for so many years and had made into one of the magazine's most popular features, anymore than the *Herald Tribune* could do this with Lippmann or Thomson. Instead what Mr. Kirstein said was that he had felt that in fairness to me he should tell me in person that he had given Mr. Hatch the control he had requested. Having lived a sheltered life away from offices, I was unacquainted with the protocol of such offices which Mr. Kirstein—formerly a businessman and the director of a health insurance plan—was observing scrupulously: that when someone in an organization was going to have something bitter done to him, it was made sweet by telling him about it in person. And so, whereas Mr. Kirstein sat expecting my thanks for the fairness and consideration he was treating me with, I sat speechless at his shocking unfairness and lack of consideration in giving anyone editorial control over the column I had been writing nineteen years. Moreover, when I did speak it was to ask a question; to which Mr. Kirstein's answer was that this was something I would have to discuss with Mr. Hatch. And when this happened a second time, making it evident that there was to be no discussion at this "conference," I asked, "What have you told me here that you couldn't as well have written me?" Taken aback, Mr. Kirstein answered, "I suppose I *could* have written you." "You *should* have!" I said vehemently, and left.

The letter from Mr. Kirstein that arrived the next morning, confirming what he had told me, ended with the statement that he had found my conduct offensive; but it was significant that he didn't do what he undoubtedly would have preferred to do, which was discharge me. In the next few days friends explained the protocol he had observed; and I wrote him explaining why I hadn't recognized his courteous intent and assuring him of my willingness to discuss with Mr. Hatch anything he would wish to discuss with me. Mr. Kirstein's reply

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accepted my explanation of the misunderstanding and proposed a conference with Mr. Hatch after November 15 for an exchange of ideas.

This conference didn't take place until mid-January of 1956, a couple of days after a column in which I reviewed *High Fidelity Record Annual 1955*, a collection of record criticism, had been rejected by Mr. Hatch on the ground that he didn't think it was the business of a critic to review other critics. This was the first matter discussed at the conference; and when I pointed out that *The Nation* was refusing to publish articles of mine of a kind it had been publishing for years—which meant not only my occasional discussion of another critic's writing, but the famous series on the book critics that Margaret Marshall, with the collaboration of Mary McCarthy, did in the thirties—Mr. Kirstein answered that he wanted to make it clear that the fact that something had been done in the past didn't mean it would be done now, adding: "*The Nation* doesn't accept certain kinds of advertising now that it accepted a year ago." He said this with no awareness of its offensive implication: that writing of mine which editors of *The Nation* had considered fit to publish and William Sloane had considered fit to reprint in *Music in The Nation*, was comparable to the kind of advertising which *The Nation* no longer considered fit to accept.

Eventually Mr. Kirstein came to the central matter—of what Mr. Hatch had in mind as my contribution to the new back section, which *The Nation* was going to feature in its promotion campaign to increase its circulation. Mr. Hatch thereupon explained that the new back section with which *The Nation* hoped to attract additional readers would be a comprehensive chronicle of activity in the arts; and what he asked of me, therefore, was more reporting of live events and less of recordings. I answered that since I had always covered live events it was clear that I had no objection to covering them; but if the objective was additional readers I reminded him and Mr. Kirstein of the hundreds of letters I received each year, mostly from readers outside of New York, who appeared to want the column as I wrote it; and I pointed out that I did occasionally get a letter from an out-of-town reader objecting to my giving space to reports of New York concerts that were of interest only to New Yorkers, instead of giving it to more of the recordings that were what people outside of New York listened to, but I couldn't recall a single letter asking for less on recordings and more on New York concerts. And if *The Nation* wanted additional readers, one large group it might try to interest was the enormously increased record-buying public, which provided *High Fidelity* with its entire circulation. However, what I said had no effect on Mr. Hatch and Mr. Kirstein; and I didn't persist.

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In the matter of my discussing other critics' writing there is this later incident to report: The following September I directed Mr. Kirstein's attention to a *Nation* editorial, *Socialist Unity in Italy,* which pointed out Arnoldo Cortesi's misrepresentation of the Nenni-Saragat negotiations in the *Times,* and which I said was an example of the inconsistency and absurdity I had pointed out a year before: that *The Nation* might discuss a political matter as misrepresented to the public in a report in the *Times,* but *The Nation*'s music critic might not discuss the controversy at City Center as it had been misrepresented to the public in articles of the *Times*'s music critic. Mr. Kirstein answered that I would be surprised to know he agreed with me: he hadn't seen this editorial yapping at the heels of the *Times* before its publication in *The Nation*; if he had, it would not have been published; and when he did see it he told Mr. McWilliams it was the kind of angry picayune nonsense he found offensive, and made his position clear enough so that similar editorials would not be published in *The Nation* in the future. And to this I replied—with great reluctance, I assured him—that we were *not* in agreement: "I didn't criticize Mr. McWilliams's publishing the editorial but his inconsistency in refusing to publish my articles. Your view that to discuss what appears in the press is offensive; your ruling that such discussion shall not appear in *The Nation*—these I strongly disagree with."

As for the matter of more reporting of live events, in June Mr. Kirstein wrote that some of his acquaintances, and his sister Mina and brother Lincoln, had told him a number of times they were enjoying my column more as a result of its greater emphasis on live events. It occurred to me to examine my columns from October to June in 1954-55 and 1955-56; and the result, as I wrote to Mr. Kirstein, was "my discovery that in 1954-55 I had discussed 33 events in part or all of 25 columns, and in 1955-56 36 events in 23 columns"—which was to say that "I gave live events no greater attention or emphasis in 1955-56 than in 1954-55," or to put it in a way I thought more significant, "I gave live events as much attention in 1954-55 on my own initiative, as in 1955-56 at the explicit request of editor and publisher"—the significance of this being its refutation of the idea I had heard was being spread around by Mr. Kirstein and Mr. McWilliams, that I was of course a good critic but had required the guiding and controlling hand of editor and publisher to do the job I hadn't done on my own.

There remains the additional guidance and control by Mr. Hatch alone. When Mr. Kirstein, at our first meeting in October 1955, had told me of Mr. Hatch's demanding and receiving the right to edit all copy, I had known what I was in for. I still have the letter in which

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Stark Young, in 1947, told me his reasons for resigning from the *New Republic*—including the messing up of his writing, which he said had never been done before; and for years thereafter he continued to speak of this indignantly; "Why, that man Hatch made me sound like an ignoramus. He made me say things that were so embarrassing I sometimes had to write to the people to explain I hadn't said them!" Mr. Hatch clearly was one of those with a compulsion to rewrite other people's writing; and what he hadn't refrained from doing to the writing of our greatest critic he would certainly do to mine. And in fact, whereas until then my task when I had received proofs had been merely to correct printers' errors, when Mr. Hatch took over I had to spend hours on the additional task of dealing with his changes. For it took time to find not just right words to substitute for the ones he had substituted, but right words that fitted into the same space as his; additional time had to be spent on the letter in which I attempted to make my substitutions acceptable to him—not only by my reasoning but by my care not to appear to be interfering with this particular way of making like an editor that had so much importance for him; and this meant spending some time deciding which of his changes to let stand as the price of undoing the worse ones. After several weeks I suggested that I send with my column a carbon copy that he would send back with his editorial revisions, which would be easier to deal with there than on the proofs. He accepted the suggestion; and from that time I received each week the annotated carbon copy and a letter raising additional questions about passages in which he had made no changes.

I am not saying Mr. Hatch didn't occasionally make a change that was valid and worth having; and I recall thanking him for his help and patience with a book review that had given me much trouble. But most of his changes were unnecessary, and often ridiculously or annoyingly so. I had referred to Toscanini's "courtesy and consideration to servants"; Mr. Hatch made it "toward servants," and kept "toward" even after I pointed out that one was courteous *to* somebody, not *toward* him. I had said my apprehensions "proved justified"; he made it "were justified." I had said that "one critic developed his idea that . . . "; he made it "one critic thinks that . . . ." I had spoken of "the absence of the power of real creative invention"; he made it "the absence of real creative power." I had said one had heard in Cantelli's performances "the authority of the kind of knowledge of everything in the score and everything going on in the orchestra . . . that commands the respect and response of an orchestra"; he crossed out "kind of." But where I had spoken of Furtwängler's "vagaries and excesses which destroyed all coherence," he made it "which served to destroy all

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coherence." I had described Mozart's Piano Concerto K.453 as "one of the greatest in the series, with a first movement that is one of the supreme examples of Mozartean instrumental high comedy, an extraordinarily organized and deeply affecting Andante, and a concluding variation movement . . ."; he changed this to "one of the greatest in the series. Its first movement is a supreme example of Mozartean instrumental high comedy; there's an extraordinarily organized and deeply affecting Andante, and a concluding variation movement. . . ."

But additional hours were required now to satisfy Mr. Hatch about the confusions which, in his letters, he managed to extract from my clarity. In one instance I criticized details of stage action in the Duma scene of a Metropolitan Opera performance of *Boris Godunov*; then I began the next paragraph with the statement "I noticed this because I was sitting in the grand tier close to the stage; and that also made a difference in what I heard"; from which I went on to describe what I heard in the orchestration more clearly from the grand tier than from the rear of the parquet. The progression of thought was simple enough: sitting in the grand tier close to the stage caused me (1) to see certain things better, and (2) to hear certain things better. But Mr. Hatch wrote that although he realized from what I said that I intended to show a connection between what I criticized in the action and what I described in the music, I hadn't made the connection evident: the difference I described in the musical effect didn't follow from my criticism of the action. But the intention to show this connection that I failed to show was something he read into writing in which there was no such intention because there was no such connection.

In another instance Erich Leinsdorf's announcement that the New York City Opera would offer a repertory ranging from *Rigoletto, La Traviata* and *Carmen* to *Orpheus in the Underworld* and *Die Fledermaus* led me to write: "I don't think it is the business of an opera company that produces *La Traviata* and *Carmen* to produce *Naughty Marietta* or *Show Boat* or *Girl Crazy* or *Guys and Dolls;* and it is even less its business to produce *Die Fledermaus* and *Orpheus in the Underworld.*" Mr. Hatch, again exhibiting his gift for muddying clear waters, inquired whether Leinsdorf intended to produce *Naughty Marietta, Show Boat, Girl Crazy* and *Guys and Dolls,* adding that if so he had missed the announcement; and he didn't understand what I meant by the statement that Leinsdorf had less business producing *Die Fledermaus* and *Orpheus,* since he had no business producing the American musicals, and one couldn't have less than nothing. To this I answered that "even in arithmetic there are minus quantities; and in writing I think one can say 'It isn't the business of an opera company to produce

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Girl Crazy, and it is even less its business to produce *Die Fledermaus*.' In its context the statement doesn't mean or imply that Leinsdorf said he intended to produce *Girl Crazy*—the context being my specific statement earlier that the two examples of light opera he decided to produce were *Die Fledermaus* and *Orpheus*."

By this time, September 1956, Mr. Hatch was writing me angrily; and in one reply I summed up the situation as follows:

> As for the details of style, I agree with you that they should not be argued about. To make writing that is unclear clear, or writing that is logically incorrect correct, no amount of trouble on your part and mine is too great; and I am grateful to you for bringing it to my attention. But only such major matters are, in my opinion, worth your trouble and mine; and most of the details you refer to as minor—"courtesy and consideration toward servants" instead of "to servants"; "the aria" instead of "this aria"; "were justified" instead of "proved justified"—in my opinion are *not* worth your trouble and mine. They are the slight idiosyncracies, and, if you will, imperfections, which a writer should be allowed.

But this didn't persuade him to change his treatment of my writing.

What did produce a change was the letter of February 6, 1957 in which Mr. Kirstein communicated what had been foreseeable from his statement at our first meeting in October 1955. Pointing out what was felt to be *The Nation*'s inadequate coverage of painting and sculpture, and the disproportionate weekly coverage of music, he wrote that as of April 1 the magazine would publish a music column only on alternate weeks. They would be glad to have me continue as music critic under those conditions, but he could understand my preferring to make other arrangements that were financially more advantageous; and if this was my decision he asked me to let him know so that they too could make other arrangements. Mr. McWilliams, Mr. Hatch and he would be happy to discuss the matter with me if I wished.

What came through to me strongly was Mr. Kirstein's confidence in his estimate of the situation: that someone who wrote for *The Nation* for what I was paid would continue to write for it for half that amount. I therefore began my reply with the statement that in effect he was asking if I would continue as *The Nation*'s music critic for half of what I was being paid; and the answer of course was no. And I included the following:

> If there were not the financial reason for my decision I would be impelled to it by the continuing indignities I have been

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> subjected to since the summer of 1955 by Mr. McWilliams, by you, and by Mr. Hatch. In recent weeks I had been expecting to tell you that you could either free me of Mr. Hatch's weekly pipsqueakeries or engage another music critic; and I will say now that *The Nation* of Kirstein, McWilliams and Hatch is nothing I care to write for. . . . I cannot think of anything I would wish to discuss further with Mr. McWilliams, Mr. Hatch or yourself.

The result was that during the remaining few weeks of my connection with *The Nation* Mr. Hatch withheld his editorial guidance, and my columns appeared, once more, as I had written them—with one exception: he refused to publish more than the first paragraph of my review of the collection *Olin Downes on Music*. And whereas Newman, after his one unpleasant experience, operated as music critic of the *Sunday Times* with no further interference, the outcome of my year and a half of unpleasantness was the statement at the end of my record review in *The Nation* of March 30, that this concluded my writing in that column.

B. H. Haggin

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BOOKS

IMPOLITE ESSAYS

CLAREMONT ESSAYS. By Diana Trilling. Harcourt, Brace and World. $4.75.

The literary form which Mrs. Trilling is using in this volume used to be called the polite essay, but as the form has recently been revived by herself, Miss McCarthy, Miss Hardwick and some other American writers, impolite essay might be a better name. Mrs. Trilling very much stands for what, in England though not in America, would be called conservative values, though she thinks of herself as a liberal who has freed herself from the conformism, in particular from the easy belief in free and easy sexual behavior, in casualness and bohemianism, and in naive or *faux naïf* fellow-traveling, which she sees as marking the everyday American liberal. She stands for the stringency of academic standards, for the comforts and decencies of the academic household, for a barrier of anonymity keeping students in their proper place, for the authority and privilege in American society which a fine teacher, like her husband, and a noted woman of letters, like herself, have properly earned. When she writes about politics, about the Hiss or the Oppenheimer cases, about the intolerableness of Communism, she even sounds, I would guess, to many Americans not at all like a liberal but like a straight conservative, putting a rational case for conservatism much more formidable, because much more coherent, than any case put forward by avowed American conservatives, like Mr. Russell Kirk. Even her Freudianism, like Freud's own, is conservative. Life is sex, or sex is life, but maintaining civilization means the acceptance of cruel repression. She writes at the end of a generous essay on Marilyn Monroe:

> Primarily she was a victim of her gift, a biological victim, a victim of life itself. It is one of the excesses of contemporary thought that we like to blame our very faulty culture for tragedies that are inherent in human existence—at least, inherent in human existence in civilization. I think Marilyn Monroe was a tragedy of civilization, but this is something quite else again from, and even more poignant than, being a specifically American tragedy.

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Mrs. Trilling is here clearly using the word "civilization" with the specific Freudian implication of a precarious socially-acquired machinery of rational control and restraint by which man prevents his more savage desires and guilts from shaking him to pieces. Yet the word "civilization" has other connotations, and I do not think it an accident that we do not, on the whole, expect Miss Sophia Loren or Miss Brigitte Bardot to expire of an overdose of sleeping pills, or even at another moral level Miss Christine Keeler (about whom Mrs. Trilling writes in another essay) to do so; in other words, the European concept of civilization is more complex than Freud's concept; it is a mechanism of repression, no doubt, but also a mechanism of connivance, it accepts the erotic, it is full of such hedgings as "Wrong but attractive," "Wrong but natural," "Wrong but you must expect most people to do it. . . ." This European concept of civilization derives, perhaps, ultimately from the Roman Catholic Church, from a tradition of firmly denouncing sin, but expecting most men to be sinners. The European tradition, as it were, accepts the erotic as part, but only part, of the range of life's possibilities, balancing against other parts, part of life's imperfection and also its richness. Marilyn Monroe was perhaps an image of the erotic as both perfect and impossible, she was everybody's dream girl, and could become so because, as Mrs. Trilling shrewdly notes, her erotic appeal was almost divorced from actual sexuality. She could be the object of an almost innocent infatuation to almost everyone but herself. In Europe she would have acquired sexiness, worldliness, a necessary defensive hardness, and would have exploited more consciously, with more distance from herself, her natural comedic talent.

Mrs. Trilling's own concept of civilization is, it seems to me, not only Freudian, but typically both Jewish and Puritan. She has, both when she writes about politics and when she judges persons, an awareness of speaking for a law, like the traditional law of the Jews, which is impossible to obey and yet which must be obeyed in every jot and tittle. She feels a compulsive need to judge, a need untouched by the Christian precept—which has never, indeed, greatly appealed to Puritans—of "Judge not, that ye be not judged." This is one reason, I think, for the extraordinary severity of her writing, and for what I have called its impoliteness. The most fascinating essay to me in this book, since modern poetry is my central interest, is one about how Allen Ginsberg, who had, as Professor Lionel Trilling's pupil at Columbia, been a sort of brilliant and exhibitionistic bad boy, in the end expelled, came back, with other Beat friends, to read his poems to a Columbia undergraduate literary society. If this essay had been a short story, I would have hailed it as

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one of the great contemporary American short stories. Since it was a document, likely to be read, for instance, by Ginsberg and his father and by Columbia undergraduates, I found myself while admiring its wonderful honesty deploring what I can call only its pride, its uncharity, its ruthlessness. There are many faculty wives, probably, who feel as Mrs. Trilling feels about students' (like religion for Lord Melbourne) being an excellent thing if they do not intrude into private life, but one is grateful, for the sake of one's happiness as a teacher, that so few express their feelings, in print, so brutally:

> If I'd been asked to explain, then, my wish not to meet and talk with this disturbing young man who had managed to break through the barrier of student anonymity, I suppose I'd have rested with the proposition that he made life too messy. . . . Of course, once upon a time—that was in the thirties—one had to defend even having a comfortable chair to sit in, or a rug on the floor. But by the forties things had changed; one's most intransigent literary friends had capitulated by then, everybody had a well-upholstered sofa, and I was reduced to such marginal causes as the Metropolitan Museum and the expectation that visitors would put their ashes in the ash-tray and go home by 2:00 A.M. Then why should I not also defend the expectation that a student at Columbia, even a poet, should do his work, submit it to his teachers through the normal channels of classroom communication, stay out of jail, and, if things went right, graduate, start publishing, be reviewed, and see what developed, whether he was a success or a failure.

There is a sort of reasoned case there, however harshly put, against the idea of the teacher, and even more the teacher's wife, as having a sort of absolute personal commitment to the student (he only occurs occasionally) who combines an ambivalent emotional dependence on the teacher with streaks of brilliance and a distinctly exhibitionistic unbalance. Such boys often seem half-idiotic and unwholesome. Yet they are a teacher's privilege as well as his burden. But reading on, I was shocked (however much Mr. Ginsberg is a self-exposer) that Mrs. Trilling should expose the reason why he was expelled from Columbia: scribbling on the window-dust of a dormitory, "Fuck the Jews." I was shocked by her smugness about the ungenerosity with which Columbia seems to have treated Ginsberg financially. He had left owing the university about $200, and wanted to pay it off by having a poetry reading. He was allowed his poetry reading, but no cash. One teacher, Mr. Dupee, took the chair and Mrs. Trilling is very lyrical about his tactful but reasonably commonplace, I would have thought, introduc-

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tory remarks. I was shocked again by her smugness about the fact that nobody but herself and two other faculty wives, like three Duchesses slumming, attended the reading; shocked at the contempt and dislike of her tone about the students and other young people in the audience: "the always new shock of so many young girls, so few of them pretty, and so many blackest black stockings; so many young men, so few of them—despite so many black beards—with any promise of masculinity." I was shocked again by her condescending tone about Ginsberg's father, placed as a sort of provincial high school teacher or principal, a man who published poems in the *Saturday Review*: by her relief that Ginsberg and his friends and the youthful audience were not smelly, had bothered to wash. In the end she absolves Ginsberg: he loves his poor dead mad mum, he loves his dad, provincially proud in the audience, he loves Lionel Trilling, and recites a kind of love poem to him. (It would have been kind of Trilling, and some of Ginsberg's other old teachers to turn up for the reading, just as it would have been generous of a very rich institution like Columbia to have waived the debt against the reading). Finally, Mrs. Trilling goes home, glowing with condescension and benevolence, to a "meeting going on at home of the pleasant professional sort, which, like the comfortable living room in which it usually takes place, at a certain point in a successful modern literary career confirms the writer in his sense of disciplined achievement and well-earned reward. . . . Auden, alone of the eight men in the room not dressed in a proper suit but wearing his battered old brown leather jacket, was first to inquire about my experience. . . ." It is, I suppose, a disciplined achievement and a well-earned reward to have Auden around in one's comfortable living room, even in a battered old jacket. But this piece was so brilliant and penetrating in some ways, certainly so gripping to read, that I was left wondering how so intelligent a woman could be unaware of the effect, in these and other sentences, of devastatingly comic self-exposure, the exposure of such a fatuous complacency and self-conceit: or, with a finer irony than I could sense through the rhythms of her prose, was Mrs. Trilling consciously exposing herself as much as Ginsberg, as genuinely loving the material signs of a successful literary career (for her husband's sake, no doubt, more than her own), and therefore like Ginsberg himself in the end absolvable, in the end human?

There are several straight critical pieces in this volume, of which two, on Edith Wharton and on *Tom Sawyer* are very fine indeed, that on Virginia Woolf too condescending. But the political essays, on the Profumo case, on Oppenheimer, and on Hiss, struck me as more gen-

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erally interesting, or more easily briefly discussable, as did also the pieces on *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* and Marilyn Monroe. What struck me as odd and interesting about these pieces was again the need to judge, to re-try, as it were, Hiss and Oppenheimer, who had already been tried, not to say punished, and to confirm Hiss's condemnation, and to give Oppenheimer a kind of half-acquittal: he ought not to have been starry-eyed about the Soviet Union during the Second World War, even though official propaganda was starry-eyed, even though President Roosevelt, at Yalta, say, might have seemed starry-eyed too. It was Oppenheimer's business to be wiser and more far-sighted than his Government, even though the amount of time he could spare for thinking about politics in the forties cannot have been high. I was struck both by Mrs. Trilling's courage in declaring against Hiss, when to do so must have made her very unpopular among what she would call conformist liberals; and yet struck also that she did not consider what seems to me the most interesting possibility, that Hiss really was a fellow-traveler, and that Chambers knew it and (a new fanaticism being just as unscrupulous as an old one) had no hesitation in framing him. She talks in these essays about "Communism," the abstraction, as being "intolerable," and I wondered whether it had occurred to her what terribly plausible cases can be made out against Judaism, Christianity, Islam as "intolerable." Carlyle in *The French Revolution* asks whether Égalité Orléans had no virtue: "Yes, virtue enough to stay alive in the world for forty-seven years." The Soviet system has had virtue enough to stay alive in the world for forty-seven years and I wondered whether, in her rigorous need to judge, Mrs. Trilling had made allowance enough for the basic virtue—a certain coherence or toughness—that must be allowed to all systems and attitudes that have the mere power of persisting. It seemed odd that she should write a long article on the Profumo case—out of a need to judge British decadence, I think—out of mere newspaper information. Here is something, which I learned quite by accident the other day, which might slightly shift her perspective: Mr. and Mrs. Profumo have recently been devoting the best part of their time to social work in England, among underprivileged young people, of an arduous, useful, and totally unpublicized sort. Mrs. Trilling seems to have this need to judge, and to judge absolutely, even where she admits that she is not specially qualified: she is asking herself whether Marilyn Monroe in the fullest sense committed suicide:

> I am not a psychiatrist and I never knew Marilyn Monroe, but it seems to me. . .

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Similarly, in the piece on Edward Albee, she admits that she does not write as a critic of drama, and shows it when she assumes that the hidden theme of a play must have explicit expression. What a searching mind, but what a blind self-assurance!

Having said all this, perhaps in a hard and unfriendly and not generously enough recognizing tone, one suddenly wonders whether one has been carried away, too much, by the "need to judge" oneself. It may well be—one doesn't know it well enough—that in the New York literary and intellectual world there is a slackness, and some kind of combination of permissiveness and conformism, that makes it both necessary and in some ways rather heroic for Mrs. Trilling to speak out in the name not of authoritativeness but of authority, in the name of impersonal standards, at the deliberate risk of appearing personally authoritative, or even bossy. Perhaps these essays should be recognized as a prize of integrity, won at the cost of an apparent ungraciousness; the kinds of complaint I have been making about Mrs. Trilling's tone may be not unlike the complaints often made, by slack belletrists, about the ones of Dr. F. R. Leavis and Mrs. Q. D. Leavis. If Mrs. Trilling writes, as she says she does, from a standpoint of "privilege," it is a standpoint also of earned privilege; it is perhaps more honest and honorable to state that standpoint, defend it, exult in it, than to affect an urbanity based on the unspoken assumption of it. Here, anyway, is a serious and honorable mind, a person uncorrupted by the wish to make genial social concessions, to be liked. Here is an ability to consider with patience and respect ideas that most of us might dismiss with a joke, like the moral and social ideas of Mr. Norman Mailer. Here is a readiness for commitment on large and general themes. I should certainly have said two things which I omitted to say: what an excellent "straight" literary critic Mrs. Trilling is, when she devotes herself, too rarely in this volume, to that discipline: and what clear, plain, and vigorous prose she writes, a model for any writer attempting that *genre*.

G. S. Fraser

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WORDS AND THINGS

COLLECTED POEMS 1925-1948. By Louis MacNeice. Oxford University Press (distributor). $6.00.
NEW AND SELECTED POEMS. By Howard Nemerov. Phoenix Books. $1.95.
PREAMBLES AND OTHER POEMS. By Alvin Feinman. Oxford University Press. $3.75.

By the time MacNeice began to publish, a revolution had already taken place. His first collection, *Blind Fireworks,* appeared in 1929, a year before Auden's debut; and his second, more significant *Poems,* in 1935. After the rigors of Pound, Eliot and Hart Crane, the poetry of the thirties initiated a period of consolidation and leveling. What one feels strongly in reviewing MacNeice's career is his tolerance for all kinds of verse, his wish to return to surface simplicities, and his desire to remove from contemporary poetry the stigmas of estheticism and obscurity. Poetry, he once said, is the way we return to normalcy. The world may be a problem, but words, on the whole, are not: art is communication, its only asceticism is that of craft, and the poet is an ordinary human being. These modest proposals were formulated, of course, with an eye to more than the dangers of art for art's sake. They also reflect an opposite pressure on writers of the thirties: to commit themselves to political verse. To walk this tightrope between pure and impure poetry was MacNeice's doom, and it results in a subdued rejection of all absolutes:

One place is as good as another. Go back
where your instincts call
And listen to the crying of the town-cats and the
taxis again,
Or wind your grammaphone and eavesdrop on great
men.

His poetry is indeed this shifting from place to place. Verses, some very wonderful and humane, appear on every subject: Ireland, Iceland, England, Spain, America. . . . And what he writes is always true in sentiment and honest in words. Too honest perhaps. For how strange that he is never extreme in words or extreme in sentiment. As one of our first academic poets, he did not escape the modern curse of reflectiveness, though he constantly wrote against it. His poetry is primarily the cultured journalism of a specialist in empathy: thoughts, opinions, feelings-for, chatter, observations. It domesticates with the heart, as Coleridge would have said; and it can repose, of course, on

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the example of the Horatian "sermon" and the verse-letter. But the commitment seems finally to be to poems rather than to poetry. Except for occasional flirtations:

> *Coral azalea and scarlet rhododendron*
> *Syringa and pin-horse chestnut and laburnum*
> *Solid as temples, niched with the sound of birds,*
> *Widen the eye and nostrils, demand hommage of words.*
> *And we have to turn from them, fit out an ethic . . .*

The result of so deliberate a turning away is a wry and modest poetry. It refuses to let us admire either its technique or the thoughts expressed by that technique.

MacNeice's methodical halfwayness comes from trying to steer a middle course between formalistic and utilitarian verse, but it may also have to do with his basic attitude toward words. Though he is moved by human degradation, he is rarely moved by the degradation of words. His attitude toward words is still determined, of course, by his situation. Surrounded by poets whom he considered to be greater, by Auden and Spender as well as Eliot and Yeats, he made himself an identity of what they lacked. In his eyes their greatest weakness was a residual hankering after the prophetic or high style, and so he chooses to become totally what he is only in part: the poet of "waifs and wraiths of image / And half-blind questions." He writes an "Hommage to Clichés," and a famous poem "Wolves" in which daily talk and laughter drown out "howling" prophets like Yeats:

> *The tide comes in and goes out again, I do not want*
> *To be always stressing either its flux or its permanence,*
> *I do not want to be a tragic or philosophic chorus*
> *But to keep my eye only on the nearer future*
> *And after that let the sea flow over us.*

In one area MacNeice was a pioneer: Auden and he sought to revive the long conversational poem. A journey to Iceland in 1936 strengthened their attraction to oral tradition. Could they find modern forms similar to those of ancient formulaic verse? Was there not something built into speech itself, Kantian forms which made communication possible and might provide the modern formulary? Auden wrote his "Letter to Lord Byron," adapting the stanza of that master of gossip, and MacNeice followed with *Autumn Journal* (1938) and the radio poem *Autumn Sequel* (1953). Both poems canvass the return of a vigorous yet contemporary oral tradition. They directly oppose Pound's *Cantos* by rejecting the complex and subduing the striking image. I still

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find *Autumn Journal* a moving documentary of the conscience of the intellectual in the late thirties. One can easily criticize it on technical grounds: by reverting, in parts, to a natural prose, the whole would surely have gained in honesty and effect. But each time I return to it I am astonished at its clarity, its volatility, its completeness. It is a brave attempt to keep in touch with everything. If it becomes a purgatory of words which does not purge, a sea which does not ablute, that also is part of its honesty. In MacNeice's poetry of the fifties a new capability is added: a purged intensity of speech, a firmer acceptance of the authority of form. There is a return of the repressed, of the purely esthetic elements, which is also a return to the beginning, for he was always basically a poet in love with the classics, seeking to modernize yet not too much. "Didymus," one of his neatest poems, classical in inspiration yet modern in theme, remains therefore his best epitaph:

Refusing to fall in love with God, he gave
Himself to the love of created things,
Accepting only what he could see, a river
Full of the shadows of swallows' wings

That dipped and skimmed the water; he would not
Ask where the water ran or why.
When he died a swallow seemed to plunge
Into the reflected, the wrong sky.

Mr. Nemerov participates in this secular *askesis*: not to fall in love with God, with Abstraction, with Romance. Perhaps we are all born into Romance, but the modern poet, a prodigal, rejects his birthright. Realism, however, is not less a corruption of reality. The modern poet often wishes to be saved from realism as Yeats had wished to be "saved from abstraction," though MacNeice was prevented by his excessive fear of art from breaking out of the "makeshift present" toward the "full leaf of insight and bloom of image." In fact, the necessary break with realism, though not with reality, the return to abstraction, though not to metaphysics, has been a predominantly American feat; and Mr. Nemerov, following Wallace Stevens, strives again for a total vision of things. He announces easily that his theme is both world and thought, "The thought of something and the thought of thought." This should make him "A trader doubly burdened," yet Nemerov, like Stevens, is strangely light-hearted about the whole enterprise, as if announcing the true subject were already a cure.

There does not seem to be an essential difference in structure or quality, between the poems written around 1950 and his recent work. The

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"Runes" are late poems, and impressive as a series. They may be somewhat surer in their aim than the earlier poems. Yet "Truth" also goes from thinkable nature, "His blue sound made the image of my thought," to the impasse of: "I/But thought the deepening blue thought of the fly." I feel the impasse is as much in Mr. Nemerov as in the nature of things, for "Runes" does not seem to me completely subdued to its subject. At a further level, however, that of rhythm and mood, Mr. Nemerov's poetry is impressive. His rhythm often determines, for good or bad, what is being said. As he puts it in "Painting a Mountain Stream" (a kind of Poetics): "Study this rhythm, not this thing." Rhythm should modify thing, as water and sleep qualify—in this poetry—the thought they carry. One must therefore ask to where this watery meditation leads the poet. The answer is that it leads him to where rhythm, a middle-being both abstract and elemental, takes shape as image or concept. The poet evokes rhythm as a flowing circle, the great round of earth, *natura rerum*, a refluent or reflexive principle. It is here that Mr. Nemerov's fantasy, though not always controlled, is most original. In seeking to encompass the totality of being without metaphysics and by sheer tour de force of imagination, his thought runs to death, and beyond death to "the other side." Subtle montages

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of animate and inanimate, and mad images of self-alienation or of going through the looking glass assail us:

The quietest thought of all stood in the pale
Watery light alone, and was no more
My own than the speckled trout I stare upon
All but unseeing. . . .
Until this trout
Pokes through the fabric of the surface to
Snap up a fly. As if a man's own eyes
Raised welts upon the mirror whence they stared. . . .

It is rare to find so uncompromising a first book as Mr. Feinman's. *Preambles* comes at one like a clenched fist, the old emblem for logic, instead of like an extended hand, the emblem for eloquence. Yet the logic of this poetry is still that of speech in a peculiar and important way. It belongs to speech in its essence, to the faculty of speech itself rather than, like grammar or rhetoric, to language and particular speech-acts.

If we reduce lyrical expression to its simplest forms we arrive at such basic speech gestures as invocation, cry, lament and praise. At an even more abstract or interior level there is the *voice* of the word or the *inscape* of speech. Rilke wondered whether the human voice did not have its own plot, an intentionality impeded by those secondary intentions we call meanings. The voice breaks at adolescence, and we can imagine a deeper, spiritual breaking, which stands to the first as the inscape of speech to speech. Why tap this vein, why invade this indistinct and shadowy land? The reason is—at least the reason of *Preambles*—that speech is phenomenal, and that like all phenomena it has a presence (not necessarily a thing-like presence) which demands respect for itself "as is": "Nothing here resolve/ To less than that these are." If, moreover, that inward presence (or *intentionality*) of speech is not heeded, there is little chance of heeding the outward presence (or *phenomenality*) of things. In this respect at least the world is made in the image of the word. And what Mr. Feinman's poetry yields most immediately is a genuine sense of both presences: of the intentionality of words in their uncanceled relation to the phenomenality of things:

Vagrant, back, my scrutinies
The candid deformations as with use
A coat or trousers of one now dead
Or as habit smacks of certitude

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Even cosmographies, broad orchards
The uncountable trees Or a river
Seen along the green monotonies
Of its banks And the talk

Of memorable ideals ending
In irrelevance I would cite
Wind-twisted spaces, absence
Listening to a broken wall

Mr. Feinman often stands close to the Stevens of *Notes Toward a Supreme Fiction*. He subsumes such subversive commands as "It must be Abstract" or "You must become an ignorant man again/ And see the sun again with an ignorant eye." Sometimes he seems to *realize* what is merely speculative in Stevens. This is the case of "Pilgrim Heights," an authentic nature-poem which is also the mind in the act of finding what will suffice (and being enriched by the not finding). But if his poetics are close to Stevens his poems are not. Their actual labor of the negative (of "decreation" as Stevens would have said) is often stronger, more ascetic. There is more of that "sacred hesitation" which in Mallarmé is still touched by tricky religious pathos but perfectly naturalized here. And if, as in Stevens and Nemerov, thought thinks its ruin, this begets no widening speculation. *Preambles* may prove to be the beginning of a new poetry because it stands beyond the comfort of speculation as well as story. Sometimes it almost stands beyond words as well, not because words are doubted vis-à-vis the stronger presence of nature, but because they want to return to the throat, to sheer potentiality. That way lie silence and sterility. I will not end, however, on a defeatist note. "It must give pleasure"; and there are many *undifficult* pleasures in Mr. Feinman's poetry. Though his restraint may result in mannerism and ambiguity, it leads to lyrical flights that have the pure and peculiar sensuousness of speech. This truly original poetry recovers a vision of words as first-created, before their fall into reified signs. The voice that gives being to light also gives being to itself, as on this "November Sunday Morning":

And the light, a wakened heyday of air
Tuned low and clear and wide,
A radiance now that would emblaze
And veil the most golden horn
Or any entering of a sudden clearing
To a standing, astonished, revealed. . . .

Geoffrey H. Hartman

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VRAIMENT CHIC

KING EDWARD THE SEVENTH. By Philip Magnus. E. P. Dutton. $8.50.
ART NOUVEAU. By Robert Schmutzler: translated by Edouard Roditi. Harry N. Abrams, Inc. $25.00.

Though equally mammoth in size, recent biographies of eminent Victorians and Edwardians do not possess the simplemindedness and unremitting adulation of most of the older "Life, Letters, and Times" school: Lytton Strachey did not quite live in vain. Less stylish than he, the new biographers have the advantage of many more papers available to them and have been freed of restraints by the deaths of those whose hurt feelings might have led to lawsuits. Sir Philip Magnus, as a distinguished biographer of Gladstone and Kitchener, had easy access to persons and papers, so much so that his modesty foreshortens what would have been a long list of benefactors: "I abandoned the attempt because the full list appeared pretentious to me." Of all his handicaps, the most limiting was the loyalty of Edward's secretary, Lord Knollys, to his sovereign's wish that much of his correspondence be burnt. Burnt too was Queen Victoria's diary by the King's sister, Princess Beatrice. And Lord Knollys' sister performed a similar service for her mistress, Queen Alexandra. All this was a "lamentable combustion," as Sir Philip quite rightly characterizes it; his grudge against Lord Knollys, justified by what he considers his errors of political judgment, is more, I suspect, a consequence of his having carried out the royal orders to burn. Only the more public aspects of Edward have survived in their fullest form; and the racier private aspects, although suggested, are not dealt with at any length.

Even if Sir Philip had more documentation for the recesses of Edward's private life, would he not have held back? He appears to have so successfully assimilated himself to the world of the court that discretion and "good taste" would have prevented him from going into details. The tone of the courtier is not altogether absent here; there are moments, fortunately few, that might well have appeared in any earlier laudation of the King. Sidney Webb is taken at face value in his fanciful assurance that Edward's handing out certificates to worthy if poor students confirmed the loyalty and affection in which British Socialists held the crown. We are asked to believe that the reputation of the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, was damaged less by the Jameson Raid than by the fact that Edward's daughter, Princess Maud, was jostled on the pavement, attempting to enter the reception that

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marked the debut of Chamberlain's third wife as a hostess. Sir Philip as courtier is at his most full-blown describing the feelings of the Hon. Oliver Montagu, an equerry, towards Alexandra: "He loved the Princess with that exalted, chivalrous and selfless passion which inspired knights in medieval romances to dedicate their lives to the service of beautiful princesses and queens. Oliver Montagu would have perished gladly to spare the Princess of Wales the least shadow of reproach or annoyance." Again, Sir Philip is disappointingly inexplicit, decorous, almost offhand, in his accounts of the major liaisons with Mrs. Langtry, Lady Brooke and Mrs. Keppel. The emphasis is upon Edward as a public figure; the private sector of the life is touched upon so discreetly that even his spirit and independence in later life seem as two-dimensional as the royal engagement book.

Royalty—and this has been the great modern triumph of the English version—is more often than not merely the ordinary man magnified; in this respect Edward fulfilled his role to perfection. The piling-up of details asks us in effect to share with the English populace their tremendous relief when Edward recovers from serious illnesses and their secondhand excitement when he wins the Derby, events that seem more "real" than the mishandled serious international and domestic problems which marked Edward's age. Sir Philip's book is essentially a royal progress, written with the same zest and panache that the author claims for his subject. As in the royal life itself, there is little discrimination between the question of what gift to give a racehorse owner, the choice of what to wear, or the problem of what to do about the House of Lords. For Edward's was fundamentally a superficial life. His mother did not trust his judgment—she realized how "impressionable" he was—and in any case did not wish to share her power, so that he was forced to be content until her death with some of the outward trappings of royalty. Then, when at last he came into his inheritance at the age of fifty-nine, he discovered that there was hardly anything but ceremonial left.

Granted that this sort of biography doesn't lend itself to the portraitist approach of Lytton Strachey. Granted that even Strachey himself was somewhat done in by royalty—his portrait of Victoria is surprisingly and endearingly sentimental. Still, he did attempt to explain, not merely to present, his subject. Sir Philip belongs with the presenters rather than the interpreters, content to offer a faithful record of a man whom he believes was faithful to himself. But the defect of the method is that we don't really know what that self was. It was submerged in the size—so fantastically nourished by those Edwardian meals—in the uniforms of the central figure, in the pageants in which he participated.

The period 1900-1914 was the climax of the pageant for its own

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sake, released from any religious significance and no longer a private ceremonial of the aristocracy. It was the age of the plutocrat, who felt no shame in displaying his wealth, and who reached his apogee in England. Compared to the rest of what Victoria called "the royal mob," consisting in large part of her grandchildren, Edward was anti-snobbish—if a willingness to accept Money as well as Rank can be so called—and he outraged the anti-Semitic Austrian royalties, whose capital was probably the most distinguished Jewish center in the world, by his friendship with Baron Hirsch. No wonder Sir Ernest Cassel came to England, and there became Edward's closest friend and financial adviser. There was plenty of anti-Semitism in England, of the nasty gossipy sort, but it did not significantly interfere with the opportunity for financial and even social success. Edward enjoyed the world of Jewish finance and the "faster" aristocracy where all was permitted except to break the eleventh commandment: "Thou shalt not be found out." Affairs were tolerated when known only to the intimates of society; when publicized through the law courts or in other ways, they then became inexcusable, and the participants were "banished." He did not take seriously his mother's warning that the life of ostentation would bring about a repetition of the French Revolution. The Queen, in her comparative seclusion, saw the upper classes as driving the rest of society to extremes, while Edward—who knew something about it, from his incognito tour of the slums and from sitting on Royal Commissions on the Aged Poor, Agricultural Depression, and the Housing of the Working Class—saw that the danger lay not in the misbehavior at the top but in the suffering at the bottom. A Tory himself (although preserving official impartiality) he was nonetheless sympathetic to the plight of the working classes; neither attitude had much influence on what his Governments did.

As Sir Philip points out, England combines intense class consciousness with a strong feeling, somewhat mitigated after 1914, that everyone has the right to exploit the position into which he has either been born or scrambled. Edward was a fine "upper bourgeois" king. His high living, his gambling, his sex life, represented the beau ideal of every late Victorian financier or businessman. What member of the upper bourgeoisie would not have liked, in his heart of hearts, to be called, as Edward was by Rudyard Kipling, "a corpulent voluptuary," or, by a Greek equerry, "*un prince vraiment chic*." Edward's very vulgarity stirred hope in the smallest businessman or stockbroker: he too could behave like a king if he believed it of himself and had the cash. Sir Philip quotes Namier's remark that "a man's status in English society has always depended primarily upon his self-consciousness; for the English . . . perceive and accept facts without anxiously inquiring into their

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reasons or meaning. Whatever is apt to raise a man's self-consciousness—be it birth, rank, wealth, intellect, daring or achievements—will add to his stature; but it has to be translated into the truest expression of a man's subconscious self-valuation, uncontending ease, the unbought grace of life." It was Edward's easy assumption of some of these characteristics, and his recognition and admission to his friendship of those who possessed the others, that endeared him to his people. It gave his royal progress through life some value.

There is something oddly like the estheticism of *fin de siècle* in Edward's relish for display and for the ceremonial aspects of his job. At his own coronation he had been impressed most by the "simultaneous movement of the peeresses in putting on their coronets." The sight of their "white arms arching over their heads" had suggested to him "a scene from a beautiful ballet." Edward, like Beau Brummel, made clothes his religion. One of his friends, Lord Hardwicke, perfected the top hat; another, Lord Dupplin, the dinner jacket. Thus, in his rather heavy germanized style he declared himself a dandy. (When redoing Buckingham Palace, he remarked, rolling his r's: "I don't know much about a*rr*t, but I think I know something about a*rr*angement.") Beardsley was surely much more the court painter of the period than Edward's butt, his Marine-Painter-in-Ordinary, the Chevalier Eduardo de Martino. Some of Beardsley's fatter figures might well be inspired by the King, Prince Tum Tum, or as he permitted some of the children of his friends to call him, "Kingy." And certainly Wilde was Tum Tum's devilish counterpart, in his period of triumph, before he broke the eleventh commandment. To suggest the limitations and superficiality of the age, as well as its fascination, Schmutzler, in his sober and handsomely illustrated study, quotes from Wilde's retelling of the legend of Narcissus. The pool speaks: "But I loved Narcissus because, as he lay on my banks and looked down at me, in the mirror of his eyes I saw my own beauty mirrored."

In the 1890's when England was still the most powerful country in the world, Art Nouveau was primarily an English-dominated movement. As with English menus, its name of course was French, derived from Bing's shop in Paris; and its Englishness was only attested to in the rarely used term "yachting style" and in its Italian name, Stile Liberty, after Arthur Liberty, the founder of the silk firm. Art Nouveau descends from Blake, was vastly expanded by the pre-Raphaelites, and found full expression in the work of Mackmurdo, Beardsley, Ricketts, and Voysey. Despite the accomplishments of Art Nouveau in Belgium, France, Germany and Spain, its triumph, to my mind, came appropriately in the great commercial city of Glasgow in the work of Charles Rennie Mack-

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intosh. Horta and Gaudi were prone to excess; Mackintosh was not. He was restrained as even Beardsley was, by that indefinable cult of the gentleman, which also prevented Edward from being a hopeless vulgarian. As Schmutzler remarks, "English Art Nouveau of the last decade of the nineteenth century bears the characteristics of the traditional English gentleman, suggesting great reserve and equanimity, and addicted to understatement. Exaggerated proportions were accepted almost as a matter of course and even the sensational and lascivious elements in Beardsley's drawing, since it was expressed in symbols, never overstepped the limits of decency." With a long tradition behind it, English Art Nouveau was not revolutionary, and appeared in much more stable forms than were found on the Continent. It participated in some of the comparative calm which characterized English upper bourgeois life before 1914. And both flourished best when they were treated with regard and care. Magnus and Schmutzler chart the decline of their subjects in the works of that Edwardian dandy, Max Beerbohm. The practical jokes of Edward and the epigrams of Wilde did not hurt—they were too self-regarding—but irony acted as a pin-prick. Beerbohm, in his caricatures of Edward, made him look ridiculous. His drawing of Oscar Wilde lecturing in Colorado, "The Name of Dante Gabriel Rossetti is heard for the first time in the Western States of America," is a parody, Schmutzler suggests, of Rossetti's "The Annunciation." That painting, done in 1850, may stand for the formal opening of the Art Nouveau movement. The Beerbohm cartoon, in 1916, is its last ironic gasp. Edward too had changed—from the rather epicene-looking youth who would have been beautifully at home in a pre-Raphaelite painting, to the portly figure caught by Beerbohm.

Taken together, these two books go some way to illuminate the contradictions of what G. M. Young has called the "flash Edwardian epilogue"—on the one hand, the "palmy days," on the other, the unmistakable signs of crisis: revolution from the Right or Left in Ireland, the ordeal of the suffragettes, the waves of strikes, the arms race, the financial decline. How did society flourish with such assurance until 1914? The playing with reality implicit in the pageantry of Edward's life and in the swirls and elongations of Art Nouveau suggests the appearance rather than the substance of power. As Voysey remarked: "We have the language of ornament and yet nothing to say." The works of Munch demonstrate how similar forms, though abandoning, as Schmutzler notes, "the elegance, the fashionable playfulness, the aloofness of the dandy," can share Art Nouveau's "hysteria, hypersensitivity and . . . fascination with eroticism." Munch explored beneath the surface, while English artists could just peek beneath in a titillating way, taking heed of Wilde's dictum: "All art is at once surface and symbol. Those

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who go beneath the surface do so at their peril. Those who read the symbol do so at their peril." In Edward's brooding eyes, tired from his continual restless movement about Europe, there is a sense of a battle almost lost; while Mrs. Keppel, the last *maîtresse-en-titre,* in the photograph of her in Sir Philip's book, suggests the half-tamed sexual power that emanates from a Klimt portrait. This final period of high bourgeois living and art appears as an attempt, through the flimsy means of decoration, to hold society together. Magnus has presented that surface, and Schmutzler its artistic counterpart.

Peter Stansky

THE FIRE THIS TIME

THE SOUTHERN MYSTIQUE. By Howard Zinn. Alfred A. Knopf. $4.95.
SNCC: THE NEW ABOLITIONISTS. By Howard Zinn. Beacon Press. $4.95.

"Now, boy, you go to writing and write up a new day."
—Mama Dollie, Lee County, Georgia

Radicalism is returning to American life. It owes its initial rebirth to the civil rights movement, but men like Bayard Rustin and others less well-known, are now moving beyond the race problem to broad social criticism. These new radicals increasingly see racism as but one symptom of our social malaise, a symptom which itself can never disappear until a broader attack is launched against the value structure which maintains it—against the preference for order, compromise and cliché over justice, principle and reality, against all that has turned us from a revolutionary outpost into a conservative bulwark.

The new radicals do not pretend to have any long-range strategy or detailed ideology; they are undogmatic, unsentimental and unhysterical. Despite their anger and disgust at the banalities and evasions of American life, their tone is one of quiet confidence. They are optimistic not only about the country's potential, but—and this is perhaps basic to any reform impulse—they are optimistic also about the ability of individuals to ascertain and manipulate reality. In this sense, the new movement marks a restoration of human confidence, the flowering of post-Freudian homiletics: neither our individual nor our collective past need determine our present goals; neither biology nor history is enough

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to prevent our planning rationally and acting boldly. We are far more free—and thus far more responsible—than the determinists have told us. The new radicals insist, in short, that we may choose what to make of ourselves and our world.

Though the radicals in our midst are few and exert little power, at least they do once more exist, and their influence might yet lead us out of the post-New Deal morass. If so, we will owe much to those activists in the civil rights movement who first pointed the way, and to those intellectuals (often activists themselves) who first saw and schematized the broader possibilities of the movement. In this last group the preeminent publicists have been Michael Harrington and Nat Hentoff. Now there is Howard Zinn.

Zinn represents an emerging breed of scholar-activists. In his early forties, he has behind him a Beveridge Prize for his first book, *La-Guardia in Congress,* seven years of teaching history at a Negro college—Spelman, in Atlanta—and extensive involvement as adviser and participant in civil rights activities, especially those of SNCC. His two new books combine a scholar's knowledge and an activist's experience, which are used to inform his theme, not to exhibit himself. Thus both books are personal without being egotistical, are authoritative but free of pedantry, and are passionate without being suspiciously agitated. The common theme of the two books—a theme which is rationale and emblem for the whole new movement of social criticism—is that it is within our power to move with high speed towards social justice. *The Southern Mystique* outlines the reasons for this optimistic belief; *SNCC: The New Abolitionists* gives us the concrete experiences of those who have carried the belief into action.

Zinn's optimism, it must be emphasized, is not about what has been done, or even what necessarily will be done, but only about what *could* be done were we to become aware of the rich possibilities for change and determined to utilize them. This qualified optimism rests on both theoretical and specific considerations. Zinn draws the theoretical testimony from a variety of post-Freudian commentators—Kurt Lewin, Dorwin Cartwright, Harry Stack Sullivan, Gardner Murphy—all of whom believe in the transcending power of the immediate. Habitual behavior, according to these social psychologists, can be radically and drastically changed, even when deeply rooted. No determinant, be it instinctual or traditional, need preclude the alteration of behavior. And behavioral transformations, moreover, need not be preceded by intellectual ones. The opposite is often true: forcing changes (through legal or extra-legal pressures) in the way people act, can, by transform-

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ing the personal and social environment, produce changes in the way people think.

When Zinn applies this body of theory specifically to the race problem in the South, his optimism is supported by many specific examples of changes already wrought in that region. Though the white Southerner, Zinn tells us, does care about segregation, he cares about other things more—about his job, staying out of jail, the approval of his neighbors, community peace, keeping educational and entertainment facilities open. Furthermore, the mystique which sees the South as utterly different from the rest of the nation, is mistaken. The South may be racist, provincial, conservative, fundamentalist, nativist, violent, conformist and militarist, but these are national not merely regional qualities, American not Southern genes. Sectional differences, in other words, are differences of degree not kind.

Zinn argues this position brilliantly and with solid evidence. Only one reluctant reservation is necessary. That is, whether his optimistic diagnosis is applicable everywhere in the South. When he says the white Southerner has "no special encumbrances that cannot be thrust aside," I doubt if this is equally true for all Southerners. Perhaps Atlantans have "no special encumbrances," but can the same be said about the

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whites in Plaquemines or Sunflower Counties? In such places the devotion to segregation may be so intransigent that it does take precedence over all other values—including money, education and peace—just as the commitment to fundamentalism, nativism, *et al.*, may be so fanatical that it is not susceptible to any but the most gradual inroads (which is not to say that the assault should be gradual). If the attitudes in such areas are variations on common national themes, they are so pronounced as to be almost new tunes.

None of this is exactly news to Howard Zinn. Knowing the South as he does from first-hand experience, he is well aware of the bitter inflexibility of certain areas within it. If he underplays this side of the picture, therefore, he does so knowingly, for a deliberate purpose. And that purpose is to encourage us to act. Too much has been said about the difficulty of producing change in the South (and in the nation) and not enough about its feasibility. Zinn deliberately stresses positive opportunities in order to counteract that mystique of intractability which for too long has served as rationale for pessimism and apathy. Zinn is here the true activist: he emphasizes those aspects of social reality best calculated to encourage involvement. He knows that the hope for significant change in this country is tenuous; he also knows that significant change will be *impossible* if we continue to dwell on the obstacles and to downgrade the possibilities. We are never in short supply of gainsayers, those eager to justify their complacency by magnifying the obstacles on the path to change. Zinn wants to prevent the number of these gloom-and-doomers from becoming so large that they will turn into self-fulfilling prophets.

Zinn does more than tell us that a new day is possible; he also shows us something of what it might consist of. His second book, *SNCC*, along with being a history of the organization, is also a history of those enrolled in its ranks. The everyday joy and terror of these SNCC workers in the South are taking on dimensions larger than the life most of us live. Certainly the joy is enviable—a warm, purposeful camaraderie—and even the terror suggests a self-confrontation most of us would welcome were the price not so high.

It is difficult, as Zinn says, not to romanticize these young adults. Yet there is no need to embroider. In their depth of feeling for each other and for their cause, in their simplicity and courage, they stand out against a purposeless, sterile backdrop in something truly like heroic outline, showing us what might be hoped for when the barriers that artificially separate people are broken down. They have lived under field conditions, of course, which by everyday standards are themselves artificial. Intimacy among them has been allowed to ripen through

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constant contact and mutual reliance, and has been further intensified by common dangers and goals. Then, too, they have had the rare fulfillment of knowing that their energies are employed in meaningful work.

As our society is now constituted, such conditions cannot be widely reproduced. The "new day" is for most of us still beyond reach. But thanks to Howard Zinn we have caught a glimpse of its splendors. Mama Dollie spoke to the right man.

Martin B. Duberman

WHAT IS A NEO-CLASSIC?

A GOD AND HIS GIFTS. By Ivy Compton-Burnett. Simon and Schuster. $4.50.

How the heart sinks—where else, as she would say, might it go?—at the thought of reading Ivy Compton-Burnett's eighteenth novel (her nineteenth, if you count *Dolores,* an unobtainable and uncharacteristically titled work, published ten years before the Blisters and Blasters series that began in the twenties).

For the uninitiated reader—and who else is to be trusted in such matters?—the tidy rhyming uniformity of all these double titles, the "special taste" one is supposed to cultivate for this author's "difficulty," like Greek olives or marzipan, and the inescapable comparison to Jane Austen ("I do not think myself that my books have any real likeness to hers. I think that there is possibly some likeness between our minds.")—all point to the dreary Womrath's conclusion that Miss Compton-Burnett is but a fiercer, tighter avatar of the tireless Angela Thirkell, turning out a fake Trollope with real toads in it every other year. . . . Though she has taken a degree in classics—which I find no excuse for all those liaisons with Greek tragedy that have been attributed to her like *la* Lupescu's affairs with exotic royalty—and though she claims she is "interested in all kinds of literature"—which does not keep her from making another claim: "I cannot tell why I write as I do, as I do not know. I have even tried not to do it, but find myself falling back into my own way"—and even though she is the wittiest writer in English since Congreve and the meanest since Hobbes, there is no basis for regarding Miss Compton-Burnett's works as an exploration of the world, or as the creation of one. They are only—only!—a judgment, a regression, and thereby a reiterated self-indulgence, which of course is what

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they are for the reader as well. As she has it, "doing things in your own way is not really doing them."

I have been self-indulgent indeed, for I have read all eighteen of these indistinguishable novels—or at least I know I have read fourteen, the other four might be any one of them that I have read twice by mistake—and it is with mixed feelings (the mixture as before) that I acknowledge *A God and His Gifts* to be every bit as brilliant, and every bit as tiresome, as all the rest.[1] It has the by now familiar features: a family in a great but decaying house, tyrannized by a larger-than-life villain who is brought down so terribly that his defeat becomes a source of appeal; the overheard presence of many generations, split-level hangers-on from anterior marriages, harmless but straight-talking senescents, hydra-like children (" 'A child is a strange thing,' said Cassius, as they were left alone. 'It is a natural thing,' said his wife, 'that is why it strikes a civilized person as strange.' "), a chorus of domestics who mirror the gentry's pecking order *en jaune,* the personnel of the Other Household, a counter-family of just one generation—a menage consisting of a queer brother and sister, for example—who are confessedly unimportant (though the modesty of such people is rather like that of Paul Valéry telling Einstein he had only the most rudimentary notion of the tensor calculus).

This dramatis personae talks, my God how they all talk, and what keeps them at it is the Terrible Event, usually involving incest, bigamy and adultery (Miss C.-B. prefers all three to be committed at one fell swoop, so to speak, as here by a father and his daughter-in-law who is probably his daughter by a previous liaison with his wife's sister). The Event, and the plot which resolves it, is carried forward by the devices of melodrama: the wrong dose of lethal medicine, the concealed will that turns out to be forged, the disaster at sea, the purloined letter, the overheard secret, the sliding panel, the marked deck, the false bottom. . . . Yet the author's peculiar genius is most flagrant at precisely this point: she manages to convey her preposterous tale *even while* and *because* her puppets are chewing at their lines, a preposterous scenery of the soul. Miss Compton-Burnett manages, in other words, her transitions, the refinements of modulation, the inflections in which she envelops her changes of pace and direction, with astonishing accuracy and effect. It is not true that these highly fenestrated novels, as Leslie

1 It betrays, actually, a larger sense of exposure to the World Outside than the author has ever permitted before. Her talent has been in her exploitation of "two inches of ivory," but in this latest book, which has a sort of Hall Caine for its eponymous "hero," she runs the risk of letting fresh air leak into her vacuum. It is a risk easily absorbed.

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Fiedler once called them in the only good nosology I've seen of Ivy Compton-Burnett's tragedies of manners, eschew description and narration in favor of repartee. In an early book like *Brothers and Sisters*, for example, there is quite as much of the one as of the other, and it is only in the latest books like *A God and His Gifts* that the talk goes on without narrative guidance—the difference is simply there, so that there is no need to make it, beyond saying that a character's eyes are "of the color that is called grey because it is no other." (There is always a lot of tautology-as-wit in these books; characters are forever saying "Well, it is what it is," or "My dear Megan, you are what you are," and smacking their lips over the jest.)

Though the expert, or the addict, may discern, as I say, such signs of "growth" or let us call it mastery at least, in the warp of Ivy Compton-Burnett's novels, it is certainly true to say that there has been no development of the woof, the mind that regards itself as resembling that of Jane Austen "possibly." And that, for the new reader, is where the real trouble lies. Our emblem of literature, of authorship at its most valuable, is the career of Shakespeare—the long curve of convention, experiment and repossession of means—and, in a modern instance, of Yeats. Or even of Jane Austen herself, all of whose works represent an exploration, a venture into the possibilities of unexposed technique, a development of feeling beyond the resources of mere judgment. We tend to discredit the—call it neo-classical—notion of an artist producing no more than what he has set out to make, progressing from the arbitrary toward a previously defined necessity, from a certain disorder toward a certain order. Even from painters and composers, after the career of a Picasso or a Stravinsky, we expect "transformation," though here we are still often content with the anthological satisfactions of having "a" Poussin on the wall, "a" Scarlatti sonata on the phonograph. Surely this prejudice of ours thrusts against a sympathy for the perfected art of Miss Compton-Burnett. Further, and deeper, we have learned to distrust a presentment of order and necessity which does not seem to have to struggle aaginst a constant sense of arbitrariness and disorder resisting the thing that is coming into being. It is the sense of such a conflict that I miss in Ivy Compton-Burnett's work, and its absence keeps me from suggesting that *A God and His Gifts* crowns the long career of this magnificent artificer, for such careers, by their nature, cannot be crowned, but only further bejeweled.

Richard Howard

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CORRESPONDENCE

Two Camps

SIRS:

Miss Sontag might have profitably begun her lengthy tribute to "camp" by quoting a lexicographer. Thus Eric Partridge's *Dictionary of Slang* defines the noun as "effeminate, esp. homosexual mannerisms of speech and gesture," and the adjective as "homosexual, Lesbian." But to the extent that "camp" is a taste, it depends on three stratagems.

1. *Inversion.* Making the real seem unreal, the genuine artificial, and vice versa. If on Scopitone D-Day becomes a mere background for the crooning and cavorting of a helmeted female pop singer, something terribly real becomes a travesty. If a gross and dilapidated actress, of whom Miss Sontag speaks respectfully, pretends on stage that her pseudo-male neuterness is desirable feminity, something unreal is being peddled as if it were real.

2. *Esthetic transvestitism.* The orchid which is really a lamp, the grotto which turns out to be a living room, the three million feathers posturing as an evening gown.

3. *The outrageous.* Cocteau's *scandale* as art. Carrying the ostentatious, exaggerated, gratuitous, wasteful to extremes—as in a Firbank novel, women's clothes of the twenties, or *Flaming Creatures* (extolled by Miss Sontag elsewhere).

All this "camping" serves the purpose of confusing esthetic as well as moral issues, by ultimately making the good undistinguishable from the bad, the purposive submerged in the sterile, backwards as good as forwards. Once the *outré* and the inverted become the quotidian, the aberrant becomes the order of the day. Miss Sontag can posit in all seriousness this "truth of taste": "the most refined form of sexual attractiveness (as well as the most refined form of sexual pleasure) consists in going against the grain of one's sex." Obviously, "camp" spreads: the heterosexual Smiths will be induced, through the mediation of the androgynous "fashion world," to keep up with the homosexual Joneses. Indeed, Miss Sontag's catalogue reads very much like *Harper's Bazaar*'s "Chic is . . ." or *Vogue*'s "People are talking about . . ." or any of numerous similar tabulations of what is "in" and what is "out."

The basic trouble with the "camp" sensibility is that it is imposed on the cult object from the outside: that it is founded neither on patient interpreting of an artist or artifact, nor on passionate commitment to an idea, but on endowing, for the reasons given above, of trivial or preposterous objects and people with a mystique, an importance, or just acceptability, totally beyond their due. The result is that artistic value now resides purely in the *attitude* of the beholder as distinguished from his judgment, let alone in any intrinsic merit of the thing itself. Hence Miss Sontag can juxtapose as seemingly equivalent Beardsley, Bellini, *Swan Lake* with Scopitone, the Cuban pop singer La Lupe (whoever she may be), and "stag movies seen without lust." Hence "great stylists" for her include pellmell the inspired Edwige Feuillère, the able but declining Bette Davis, the commonplace Barbara Stanwyck, and the unmentionable Tallulah Bankhead. Hence, too, *Drôle de Drame* becomes tantamount to a bit of Mae West, *Der Rosenkavalier* can be brought under the same hat with "the concoctions of Tin Pan Alley," Crivelli's paintings with Sternberg's *The Devil Is a Woman,* de Gaulle with De Mille.

This leads to contradictions, or at least tergiversations: "Art Nouveau

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[is] the most typical and fully developed Camp style"—"a full analysis of Art Nouveau . . . would scarcely equate it with Camp"; "Camp . . . doesn't argue that the good is bad, or the bad is good,"—"the ultimate Camp statement [is]: it's good *because* it's awful." Wilde, whom Miss Sontag admires, is given as an example of one of the two acceptable kinds of "camp," the "wholly conscious (when one plays at being campy)"; yet "probably, intending to be campy is always harmful."

Miss Sontag not only lands in contradictions, she also leaps into unsupported assumptions. She defines "camp" as the preeminence of style over content, as if all style were equally expressive and meaningful. She accepts without challenge a "self-elected class, mainly homosexuals" as the "aristocrats of taste." She speaks throughout of a concern with esthetics as if equal to a defensible esthetic. Her method may be illustrated by her note 42: "One is drawn to Camp when one realizes that 'sincerity' is not enough. Sincerity can be simple philistinism, intellectual narrowness." From this enthymeme, it follows that if sincerity is not enough, one seeks out the other alternative, "camp"—as if there were not a vast body of first-rate and second-rate art which is both sincere and unphilistine.

About Miss Sontag's "ultimate Camp statement: it's good *because* it's awful," which, she adds, doesn't *always* hold true, I can say only that it is never true. Something can merely be good *in spite* of the fact that in some ways it is awful. But enough; perhaps, after all, Miss Sontag meant the whole thing only as a piece of "camp."

John Simon

SIRS:

Mr. Simon has struggled with my "Notes" and now puts forward as his contribution — his "strategies"? — three of the notions I mentioned: inversion, esthetic transvestitism, and the outrageous. From this I conclude that he has read the "Notes." But, for all his diligence, Mr. Simon has missed the point.

Perhaps the trouble lies in Mr. Simon's inability, or unwillingness, to distinguish what he calls "tribute" from explication and analysis. If he could make this distinction, he would not spend most of his letter repeating what I've said in a garbled form—as if simply to repeat it amounted to offering an argument against it.

Sure, Camp has to do with fashion. Of course, it is largely "imposed . . . from the outside." Indeed, yes, I have "juxtaposed" (but *not* as "seemingly equivalent" or "tantamount") Beardsley with Scopitone movies, Crivelli with De Mille. Again, yes, I am aware that Camp bypasses the traditional division between good and bad art, which, by the way, is much more complicated than Mr. Simon lets on. Precisely what I wished to point out was that Camp is an extremely subjective type of taste—what Mr. Simon lamely calls an "attitude" as opposed to a "judgment."

But what about all this? The Camp sensibility exists, all too obviously limited but with its creative and refreshing side as well. Is it not to be

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described? There's lots to be said about the sterilities and limitations of Camp taste, but Mr. Simon has said none of it. Mr. Simon offers nothing but his self-righteous zeal on behalf of Good Art, and his anxieties. Let me reassure him that it is unlikely that either Camp taste or talking about Camp will ever have the effect of "making the good undistinguishable from the bad." Mr. Simon, no one is trying to contaminate your bodily fluids.

What can I say to Mr. Simon's absurd charge that I hold "all style" to be "equally" expressive and meaningful except to wonder how it would be possible to hold such a position? And to his allegation that I "accept without challenge a self-elected class, mainly homosexuals, as the aristocrats of taste," except sigh? Is Mr. Simon totally unable to tell approving of something from describing it? Is to mention someone necessarily to mention that person "respectfully"? One cannot always be on the attack.

Lastly, about Mr. Simon's sly admonition to look to the lexicographers. Mr. Simon has decided to quote only definitions 3 and 4, since definitions 1 and 2 don't suit his purposes. But there is more to ideas than even *all* of what Partridge, or Webster, says about them. Mr. Simon must know this, too. What he really means to do at the beginning of his letter is to drag in the red herring of homosexuality. But the connection between homosexuality and Camp taste—which I tried to explain in the "Notes"—is a part of the phenomenon, not an argument against it.

Susan Sontag

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Comes The Revolution

SIRS:

I should like to correct what I consider a distortion not only of my position but of the text of my book in Mr. Berman's review (PR, Fall 1964).

1. Mr. Berman maintains that my "social criticism" seems "limited to the Marxist dialectic which seeks 'to recognize and seize the liberating potentialities' hidden in an oppressive social system." He contends that such criticism does not "account for the people who are "risking their lives in Mississippi and elsewhere today because they *won't* live in a society shot through with racial and economic exploitation." He further contends that the "conflicts that are stretching American society to the breaking (or remaking) point find not even an echo" in my pages. Now it is certainly possible to overlook an incidental passage in a book of 257 pages, but it seems hardly possible to overlook its very conclusion and the perhaps most emphatic passage of the whole. Here it is:

> However, underneath the conservative popular base is the substratum of the outcasts and outsiders, the exploited and persecuted of other races and other colors, the unemployed and the unemployable. They exist outside the democratic process; their life is the most immediate and the most real need for ending intolerable conditions and institutions. Thus their opposition is revolutionary even if their consciousness is not. Their opposition hits the system from without and is therefore not deflected by the system; it is an elementary force which violates the rules of the game and, in doing so, reveals it as a rigged game. When they get together and go out into the street, without arms, without protection, in order to ask for the most primitive civil rights, they know that they face dogs, stones, and bombs, jail, concentration camps, even death. Their force is behind every political demonstration for the victims of law and order. The fact that they start refusing to play the game may be the fact which marks the beginning of the end of a period. (*One-Dimensional Man,* p. 256 f.)

Mr. Berman says that "to put down Marcuse's book and pick up the morning paper, the reader might think he were in a different world." I wonder what morning paper Mr. Berman reads.

2. Mr. Berman accuses me of having worked out a "monistic" theory for a monistic society which, after all, is not so monistic—he accuses me of not seeing the contradictions permeating the "old system." Again, the text which he apparently overlooked is in the conclusion of the book and refers back to what was said before:

> The unification of opposites characteristic of advanced industrial society must be, *in all its reality,* an illusory unification, which eliminates neither the contradiction between the growing productivity and its repressive use, nor the vital need for solving the contradiction. But the struggle has outgrown the traditional forms . . . (*Ibid.,* p. 256)

3. Mr. Berman engages in an uncalled-for concern with my person (or personality) when he writes that I seem "to take a perverse pride" in my isolation, which I carry to "gratuitous extremes." As an example he refers to my discussion of universal concepts and to my critique of some representative trends in empirical sociology. The connection with my personal isolation is not clear to me, nor is any other justification of his psychological insight. But

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I do not feel isolated and therefore I cannot take pride in my isolation. In fact the book which is supposed to testify to this isolation was written in close contact with my friends and my students (many of whom have become my friends) here and abroad, in Waltham and elsewhere. Mr. Berman assures us that Waltham isn't "*that* far out." Indeed, from Waltham so many students went down South because of their "flat refusal to stand any longer for systematic injustice." For them too, my book was written, and they did find an "echo" of the world in its pages—perhaps they could read it without the time-honored clichés in their mind—the comforting clichés of rejecting pessimism because in reality things aren't that bad and may even be looking up a bit. Accentuate the positive. Well, I did. Immediately preceding the sentence (quoted by Mr. Berman) about the negative character of the critical theory of society is the statement (not quoted by Mr. Berman):

> the chance is that, in this period, the historical extremes may meet again: the most advanced consciousness of humanity, and its most exploited force. It is nothing but a chance . . . (*Ibid.*, p. 257)

This was my way of "accounting" for the young people who are risking their lives in the South, and not only in the South of this country. And my book ends with quoting one of the greatest tributes that has ever been paid to hope—to uncompromising hope. Mr. Berman ends his review with the mature, realistic understanding of the man who knows the world and the rules of the game while making his bow before the "spirit":

> There are times when even the best Ideas serve only as dead weight,

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and when letting them go will give the spirit new life.

I am not yet that mature, and I am not yet willing to let the best ideas go.

Herbert Marcuse

SIRS:

I am sorry for my neglect of the concluding passage in *One-Dimensional Man*. But I am sorrier still that the openness of mind evident on the last page contrasts so starkly with the closed, fatalistic perspective which (as many, many citations in my review will show) pervade the book as a whole.

But even this open end is highly problematical. The one possible vehicle for constructive social change, according to Marcuse, is a "substratum of outcasts and outsiders" who "exist outside the democratic process," whose opposition "*violates* the rules of the game, and, *in doing so,* reveals it as *a rigged game.*" (Italics are mine.) These formulations of dissent are shot through with ambiguity, an ambiguity which *emerges* if the words are pressed hard. Marcuse conceives violation of the rules of a given "game" as the way to expose its inherent crookedness. And yet, as we generally understand the word, it is precisely the violation of the rules which *makes* a game crooked in the first place. When we charge the numbers game with being rigged, or say that "the World Series was rigged in 1919," we mean to imply that lotteries or baseball *can* be conducted honestly, but that *in particular cases* they in fact are not. To play it straight means not to *abandon* the "rules of the game," but rather to *restore* them and make them operative. Similarly, politically, the democratic process in Mississippi is understood as "rigged" only insofar as it is *violated*, insofar as the crooks and murderers in power there have power enough to break the rules and keep Negroes, liberals and dissenters out; the radical civil rights workers who are getting beaten and killed down South are challenging the rigged way in which the democratic game is being played—and betrayed—in the name of the game itself. If this were all Marcuse meant, I would have no quarrel with him. But his paradoxical twist of the rules-of-the-game metaphor, which flies so boldly in the face of "ordinary language," suggests strongly that his quarrel with "the system" is less ordinary than this: he seems to intimate that there is something rigged about "the democratic process" *in itself*. Now if Marcuse really does believe that democracy is inherently incapable of coping with the contradictions and iniquities of advanced industrial society, he should say so—and say why. (Classical conservative and reactionary thought will provide him with plenty of arguments.) But if he doesn't, he should prune his revolutionary pretensions, and fight not "the system" as a whole, but *particular aspects of* the system which pervert its best principles and keep it from keeping its original promise. This would entail making a distinction between "advanced industrial society" *as such,* with all its infernal machinery of repression, and advanced industrial society *as it actually operates in America*—and elsewhere in the West—where there are liberal traditions and democratic institutions which at least to some extent gum up its works. As radicals and socialists we should be aiming not to abolish these traditions and institutions, but to fulfill them. There's enough wrong with our society already; must we make things even harder for ourselves by denying there's anything right?

Marshall Berman

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